REAL MADRID: ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER CRISIS

www.worldsoccer.com

Australia $9.50 Canada $9 South Africa R44.95 USA $6.95 FEBRUARY 2007 £3.30

WORLD SOCCER®

The essential football magazine

6 42633 92219 1 02

AOL Keyword: World Soccer

Printed in the UK

SEVILLA

THE TEAM EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Cristiano Ronaldo leads the

CLASS OF 2007

TALENT SCOUT SPECIAL

8 YOUNGSTERS TIPPED FOR THE TOP THIS YEAR

ON SALE 18 JAN

from the makers of *Rugby World* magazine

Six teams
Fifteen games
One winner...

THE SIX NATIONS

...and to celebrate the titanic battle for Europe's biggest prize, *Rugby World* is publishing a sensational, special extra issue, only available at WHSmith

Buy your copy from any WHSmith branch!

FEBRUARY 2007 Vol 47 No 5

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ART EDITOR Gary Payne
PRODUCTION EDITOR Peter Neish
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY June Hiscock
PICTURES Pictures copyright: Empics, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to Mike Hughes, David Rallis, Glenn Rickwood

EDITORIAL
King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7261 5737
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7261 7474
E-mail: world_soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING Simon Gerard, Alex Mills
ADVERTORIALS AND SPONSORSHIP Matt Johnston
PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Yee Lei Sheng

MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Williams
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Adrian Booker

Display Ads +44 (0) 20 7261 5499
Classified Ads +44 (0) 20 7261 2823
Insert sales +44 (0) 20 7261 7710
Back issues +44 (0) 20 7261 5714
Binders +44 (0) 20 7261 5714

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 7261 7715 or 7082
E-mail: Siriliya_Nawalkar@ipcmedia.com

ipc COUNTRY & LEISURE MEDIA
A part of IPC Media, A Time Warner company

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)845 676 7778
E-mail: ipcsubs@qss-uk.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual subscription is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £37.70
Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 78 euros (airmail)
USA: $89.65 (airmail)
Rest of world: £63.30 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House, 9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH, England
Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

WORLD SOCCER is a member of
ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES
● A Bola (Portugal) ● Don Balon (Spain) ● Fanatik (Turkey) ● Foot (Belgium) ● Kicker (Germany) ● La Gazzetta dello Sport (Italy) ● Sport-Express (Russia) ● Voetbal International (Holland) ● World Soccer (UK)

FEBRUARY 2007

WORLD SOCCER comment

A NEW YEAR, and time to speculate on what the next 12 months hold in store. This month, we turn the focus on the young players who could make an impact at some of the year's big international events, the Copa America and the European Under-21 Championship, as well as the UEFA Champions League. Because many of the young players who dominated the January transfer window news – Fernando Gago, Franck Ribery, Javier Mascherano – have already featured in our Talent Scout section, we've tried to select players who are not widely known outside their own country.

A desire to be among the first to know about a particular player is only natural for serious observers. But as Paul Gardner notes on page 44, the trend of South American players moving to Europe at an increasingly young age is a cause for enormous concern. The current system relies on both buying and selling clubs acting responsibly – which makes the behaviour of Arsenal all the more worrying.

We could have filled our entire feature with youngsters who are either coming through the ranks at Arsenal or who are spending time on loan at other clubs before returning to the Gunners. During Arsene Wenger's decade in charge, Arsenal have developed a reputation for nurturing talent that is unrivalled in the world game. The club's youth and scouting network is spreading its tentacles further and further around the globe. But they have not been without criticism.

Paris Saint-Germain were left seething by the manner of Nicolas Anelka's departure to London in 1997. There was similar controversy when Arsenal took advantage of Barcelona's lapse in securing the teenage Cesc Fabregas to a professional contract and lured him and his family to London. And now we have the case of Carlos Vela. As we report on page 29, Guadalajara, the Mexican club where Vela started his career (but never played a first-team game), insist that they received a fee from Arsenal for the player. Vela does not turn 18 until March and so should have been subject to FIFA regulations banning the inter-continental transfer of under-18s.

It is unlikely that Guadalajara would let such a precocious talent as Vela – top scorer at the 2005 Under-17 World Championship – move for no fee, yet Arsenal have insisted that no money changed hands. Someone is not telling the truth. When contacted by *World Soccer*, FIFA promised that its legal department would look into the Vela deal, but no response had been forthcoming at press time.

If FIFA is unable to police the international transfer market, then rich western clubs will plunder South America and Africa with increasing ferociousness. It's an issue that is not going to go away. We'll follow up the story next month – along with David Beckham's move to Los Angeles Galaxy, which was announced as we went to press. See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

SAVE MONEY ON WORLD SOCCER
SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER ON PAGE 38

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

contents

WS WORLD SOCCER FEBRUARY 2007 VOL 47 NO 5

HEADLINERS
6 Juan Sebastian Veron
7 Matias Fernandez

DISPATCHES
From our correspondents
14 Brazil
16 Spain
18 Turkey

COVER STORY
The class of 2007
22 Cristiano Ronaldo
24 Alexandre Pato
25 Jan Schlaudraff
26 Micah Richards
27 Alberto Aquilani
27 Ibrahim Afellay
28 Santi Cazorla
28 Fabrice Muamba
29 Carlos Vela

CLUB FOCUS
30 Sevilla

SIX OF THE BEST
36 Surprise packages

DIGEST
News and reports from around the world
48 Club World Cup
50 Italy
52 Germany
53 France
54 Rest of Europe
62 The Americas
66 Asia/Oceania
68 Africa
69 Non-FIFA football

REGULARS
8 Brian Glanville
10 Far & Wide
12 Jim Holden
38 Subscriptions
40 Keir Radnedge
42 Movers & Shakers
43 Back issues
44 Paul Gardner
46 David Conn
71 Classified ads
75 World Service
90 The Knowledge

Movers & Shakers, p42

Six of the best, p36

BRADLEY'S PROVISIONAL LICENCE
UNITED STATES: Bob Bradley has been appointed interim national coach after the federation failed to agree terms with Jurgen Klinsmann. **Page 64**

SIMEONE'S BOCA SHOCKER
ARGENTINA: Former national team captain Diego Simeone capped the fine start to his coaching career by steering Estudiantes de La Plata to triumph in the opening championship. **Page 62**

COMPLACENCY RULES
BRAZIL: The locals believe they will easily see off Colombia's rival bid for the 2014 World Cup, but the finals could be taken away from South America altogether. **Page 14**

COVER STORY
THE CLASS OF 2007
Spotlight on the young players tipped for the big time in the next 12 months. **Page 22**

LE GUEN MAKES RAPID EXIT
SCOTLAND: Paul Le Guen's troubled reign at Rangers ended after just seven months. **Page 56**

TROUBLE AT FEYENOORD
HOLLAND: There was more turbulence at the Rotterdam club, with fines for crowd disturbances at two UEFA Cup matches and under-pressure chairman Jorien Van den Herik stepping down after 14 years. **Page 54**

WERDER'S WINTER WARMER
GERMANY: The Bremen side went into the winter break at the top of the Bundesliga, ahead of Schalke on goal difference and three points clear of Bayern Munich. **Page 52**

POWER AND CORRUPTION
TURKEY: The federation and top club Fenerbahce are locked in a bitter fight in the midst of a swathe of bribery and match-fixing allegations. **Page 18**

INTER'S CROWN
JAPAN: Internacional secured another victory for Brazil in the revamped Club World Cup. **Page 48**

NEW YEAR, NEW CRISIS
SPAIN: Real Madrid's defeat at Deportivo La Coruna in their opening game of 2007 deepened the sense of crisis at the club. **Page 16**

SPEND OR I GO, WARNS DEL PIERO
ITALY: The Juventus forward has called for major team strengthening with the club apparently on course for a Serie A return. **Page 50**

● 10/12/06

In a tangle…Al Ahly's Emad Moteab is on top during his side's 2-0 defeat of Auckland City at the Club World Cup

● 10/12/06

Stand-off…Arsenal's Adebayor comes under pressure from Chelsea's Makelele and Terry in the Premiership. The game ends 1-1

● 10/12/06

Attacking spirit…Goran Pandev takes on the Roma defence during Lazio's 3-0 derby triumph in Serie A

● 11/12/06

Angled drive…America's Claudio Lopez (left) gets in on goal as his side beat Chonbuk Motors 1-0 at the Club World Cup

● 13/12/06

Target man…Klaas Jan Huntelaar celebrates scoring in Ajax's 3-0 UEFA Cup win over Zulte-Waregem

HEADLINERS

JUAN SEBASTIAN VERON

Title winner after returning to original club Estudiantes

MORE THAN A decade after leaving his hometown club, bound for Boca Juniors and then Europe, Juan Sebastian Veron made a triumphant return to Estudiantes de La Plata as they won Argentina's opening championship.

The team he joined had no lack of firepower. A front partnership of the bustling Mariano Pavone and the veteran Jose Calderon guaranteed Diego Simeone's men a powerful penalty area presence. Veron made the bullets for them to fire, orchestrating from midfield and striking his corners and free-kicks with a vicious swerve.

Veron's quality and authority turned Estudiantes from a mid-table team into champions. He gave them the self-belief and the tools to set off on an amazing winning streak that culminated in a play-off victory against Boca after the teams finished level on points.

It was a triumph every bit as dramatic as Lazio's last-day clinching of the Serie A title in 2000, when Veron and Simeone were partners in the Rome club's midfield.

There seems little chance of Veron eventually following Simeone into coaching – he says he is much more interested in becoming a director at Estudiantes. But his playing days are far from over. Argentina coach Alfio Basile is a fan, so an international recall is a strong possibility. And Veron is adamant that his second spell with Estudiantes is only getting started. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm very happy in La Plata," he said in response to interest from America of Mexico.

Such contentment should not be read as lack of ambition. In the late 1960s Estudiantes caused a shock by winning the Libertadores Cup three years running. The star was Veron's father, Juan Ramon. The first title came in 1968, when Veron Snr scored in all three legs of the Final against Palmeiras. Now Veron Jnr has helped them qualify for the 2008 version. "I'm dying to play in the Libertadores," he says. "I can hardly wait to represent Estudiantes in the competition" – and celebrate in style the 40th anniversary of his father's feat.

Tim Vickery

'I'm not going anywhere. I'm very happy in La Plata…and dying to play in the Libertadores Cup'

Opening up…Veron hails Estudiantes' championship triumph

Award then abroad…Fernandez (left) makes his league debut for Villarreal against Valencia

MATIAS FERNANDEZ

Chilean forward takes Latin America's top player prize

JUST DAYS BEFORE completing his move from Chile's Colo Colo to Villarreal of Spain, Matias Fernandez was named Latin America's Footballer of the Year.

The 20-year-old gained 63 votes in the poll of journalists run by Uruguayan newspaper *El Pais* after his fine performances as a second striker in Colo Colo's run to the Sudamericana Cup Final and double championship success in the domestic league. Boca Juniors pair Fernando Gago and Rodrigo Palacio were second and third respectively with 53 and 50.

The award, the region's most prestigious individual prize, is open only to players appearing for a club side in the Americas. Previous winners include Carlos Valderrama, Enzo Francescoli and Romario. Fernandez is only the third Chilean to win the award after Marcelo Salas (1997) and Elias Figueroa (1974, 1975 and 1976). Carlos Tevez, the winner for the past three years, did not make the top 10 this time, although he was eligible having played for Corinthians of Brazil in the first six months of 2006 before his controversial move to West Ham.

POLL RESULT

1	Matias Fernandez (Colo Colo)	63
2	Fernando Gago (Boca Juniors)	53
3	Rodrigo Palacio (Boca Juniors)	50
4	Rogerio Ceni (Sao Paulo)	45
5	Fernandao (Internacional)	36
	Humberto Suazo (Colo Colo)	36
7	Juan Sebastian Veron (Estudiantes)	29
8	Hugo Ibarra (Boca Juniors)	24
9	Daniel Diaz (Boca Juniors)	23
	Gonzalo Higuain (River Plate)	23

Numbers game

£26.2m…

the cost to Real Madrid of signing three young South American players – Fernando Gago, Gonzalo Higuain and Marcelo.

33…

the number of first-team games played by Gonzalo Higuain at River Plate before his transfer to Real Madrid.

9…

the number of months Brazilian striker Adriano had failed to score for Internazionale before ending the drought against Atalanta in December.

15…

the points gap between Lyon and second-placed Lens at the halfway stage of the French league season.

7…

the number of months Paul Le Guen spent in charge of Rangers, the shortest tenure in the club's history.

12…

the number of months Benfica midfielder Nuno Assis has been suspended by the Court of Arbitration for Sport after he tested positive for nandrolone.

2…

the length in years of the contract extension offered by Real Madrid to David Beckham.

● 13/12/06

Title glee...Veron and Luguercio enjoy Estudiantes' defeat of Boca Juniors in a play-off

● 13/12/06

Obstacle race...Palermo's Caracciolo heads for a fall under a challenge from Placente of Celta Vigo in the UEFA Cup

● 13/12/06

Leading man...Luiz Adriano celebrates putting Internacional 2-1 ahead against Al Ahly in the Club World Cup semi-finals

● 14/12/06

Ground control...Ronaldinho goes on a dribble during Barcelona's 4-0 Club World Cup win over America

● 15/12/06

Hitting gold...Qatar players show their joy after beating Iraq 1-0 in the Asian Games Final

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on Chelsea's woes...

questions for Curbishley

...and McClaren's

coaching overload

HOW DEEPLY reassuring to perceive that money isn't everything. Even when you have as much as Roman Abramovich. Last summer, the odds against Chelsea being challenged seriously for the championship this season seemed longer than ever when they acquired Andrii Shevchenko, for over £30million, and Michael Ballack, on a "free" but with a vertiginously high salary. But what has either of them contributed to the cause?

Shevchenko has been largely firing blanks, and reached a nadir in the FA Cup tie at home to little Macclesfield when procuring, to the fury and contempt of the opposing captain, a doubtful penalty. Adding insult to injury, the Macclesfield keeper was sent off. Shevchenko did little else of note in the game.

As for Ballack, the word is that his team-mates have been thoroughly disillusioned by his performances. He has made somewhat unconvincing excuses but the fact is he has never seemed fully committed to the cause.

The pair's mediocre contribution has come as the team as a whole have stumbled to a series of draws in the League. In fact, of late, this has been a Chelsea team with an inverse ratio between expenditure and success.

Off target...Shevchenko cannot find the net against lowly Macclesfield

There has not been much dismay over the fact that Chelsea's voluble, volatile, not to say arrogant manager, Jose Mourinho, has lately been obliged to adopt such a defensive posture. At the start of the season, he told us he was glad to have a relatively small squad since this meant that everyone would get games. When things went wrong, we were informed that he hadn't got enough players. Oh, pull the other one!

Mourinho has also committed the cardinal error of criticising his team, albeit somewhat unconvincingly, telling us that he himself may be at fault. Rumours, inevitably denied at Stamford Bridge, have it that he might be replaced by Guus Hiddink come the summer. The Dutchman is currently in charge of Russia but allegedly having his salary paid by Abramovich.

Mourinho's has always been what you might call a high-wire managerial display with all its attendant risks.

'The word is that Ballack's team-mates have been thoroughly disillusioned by his performances'

AFTER West Ham beat Brighton 3-0 in the FA Cup, having previously gone down 6-0 at Reading, manager Alan Curbishley gave what could be termed an anti-press conference. He was outraged, he said, by the criticism of young Hammers captain Nigel Reo-Coker, and displeased by the way his own views about the influx of new players during the close season had been misinterpreted.

However, it seemed to me that on the latter score he had been quoted quite accurately, his insistence now being that he simply wanted to bring in more experienced players in order to stop the rot.

No questions...Curbishley defies the media after the Brighton game

Curbishley then marched out of the room, refusing to take any questions. Willy nilly, the word "pathetic!" sprang from my lips, which, predictably, didn't please him.

But I see no reason now to withdraw it, since his refusal to answer questions begged two major questions. In the first place, if he felt so strongly that Reo-Coker had been traduced, why was he not even on the bench against Brighton? The belief among some had been that West Ham were keeping their captain from becoming cup-tied so he could be sold.

Secondly, and this was a question I urgently wanted to ask, how could Curbishley justify his failure to put Argentina's Carlos Tevez on the field at Reading, when he had had such a lively second half the previous Saturday, at home to Manchester City, as a substitute? That afternoon, significantly, the crowd loudly chanted: "There's only one Carlos Tevez," until Curbishley at last brought him on. At the subsequent press conference, when he was actually answering questions, the manager seemed surprised by such public enthusiasm, reflecting that Tevez hadn't yet scored. The ultimate criterion?

Against Brighton, when Tevez started the game, he had a vibrant second half, showing his pace, power, skill and determination. No, he didn't score, but he was arguably the outstanding player on the field. Supporters aren't stupid.

IT WAS NO great surprise really to find poor, beleaguered Steve McClaren endorsing Jurgen Klinsmann's penchant for more and more coaches. The England manager believes that "we will see teams of coaches evolve...We are able to get more and more factual information from the game. Factual information, not just instinct."

Heaven forbid that we should cater to instinct, to the ability of certain gifted players to "invent the game", as the Italians used to say. McClaren already surrounds himself with counsellors, cronies, Terry Venables and even a psychologist. What earthly good do they all do him?

"We need to coach our players on an individual basis," McClaren says, "and nurture the special players because they are the ones who are going to win you football matches." Wouldn't it be wiser just to leave them alone?

Notes & quotes

"Football is my life. I'm convinced I've still got two years at the top level left in me."

French keeper Fabien Barthez comes out of retirement to sign a six-month deal at Ligue 1 strugglers Nantes.

Old head, new start...Barthez turns out for Nantes

"Even the greats blow a fuse sometimes. Look at Zidane."

Ecuador World Cup striker Agustin Delgado tries to play down his behaviour after being banned for 12 months for his part in a mass brawl involving players from his side, LDU Quito, and Barcelona of Guayaquil.

"History will say that it was an error on my part not to present the World Cup to the Italians."

FIFA president Sepp Blatter issues a *mea culpa* for allowing UEFA supremo Lennart Johansson to hand the trophy to Fabio Cannavaro in Berlin.

"For Feyenoord. Against violence."

The wording of an appeal, paid for by the Rotterdam club and published in the *Algemeen Dagblad* newspaper, after more hooliganism by Feyenoord fans, this time during a UEFA Cup trip to Nancy in France.

● 17/12/06

Going for goal...Al Ahly's Flavio shoots during the 2-1 win over America in the Club World Cup third-place game

● 17/12/06

Global reach...the Internacional squad celebrate victory over Barcelona in the Club World Cup Final

● 17/12/06

Festive mood...Werder Bremen enjoy their defeat of Wolfsburg which makes them the Bundesliga's "winter champions"

● 18/12/06

Trophy time...Fabio Cannavaro collects the FIFA World Player of the Year award

● 19/12/06

Name game...the Asian Cup draw is held in Kuala Lumpur

far&wide

You lose some, you win some

SIX MONTHS AFTER the World Cup, Oliver Kahn has outlined his theory about why Germany would have done even better than their third-place finish if he had been first-choice keeper.

"It's not a criticism of Jens Lehmann," Kahn said, "but if I had been picked, we would have won the World Cup. In my career I lost the UEFA Cup Final with Karlsruhe in 1994 then won it with Bayern two years later. In 1999 I lost the Champions League Final to Manchester United and was victorious two years later. In 2002 Germany lost to Brazil, so if I had played in 2006 we'd have won."

Out of turn...Kahn is sure he was denied a World Cup triumph

Romanian holiday?

Dinamo Bucharest are 13 points clear at the top of the Romanian League at the winter break and the board are so confident that they will go on to take the championship that they have paid coach Mircea Rednic half of his £50,000 title-winning bonus as a Christmas present.

The club have also turned their minds to where home Champions League games will be staged. President Nicolae Badea said: "Our stadium isn't up to UEFA specifications. But as there are 700,000 Romanians in Italy and around a million in Spain, playing in those countries would be like playing at home, the only difference being that there's a bit more sunshine over there."

Adriano gets canned off

Last year was a forgettable one for Brazil striker Adriano. Out of sorts both for his country at the World Cup and for his club, Internazionale, in Serie A, he capped it all by becoming the runaway winner of the "Golden Can" trophy – awarded to the worst footballer of the year in Italy in the opinion of listeners to off-the-wall Italian radio programme Catersport. The heavyweight left-footer scooped 31.2 per cent of the votes, giving him a landslide over his closest rivals, Milan strikers Alberto Gilardino (9 per cent) and Ricardo Oliveira (8.7).

Adriano, who not surprisingly was unavailable for comment, takes the mantle from Christian Vieri and is the second Brazilian to win the award after Rivaldo in 2003.

Praise be!

Albanian league leaders SK Tirana sought divine intervention after usually prolific goalgetter Hamdi Salihi suffered a slump in form. With the derby against Partizani looming, club owner Refik Halili called on 30 priests to pray for an end to the striker's one-month barren spell.

Salihi duly hit the target during Tirana's 3-2 win, leading Halili to comment: "I think I did my duty. Salihi is a born striker and the fact he had not scored for four weeks had blocked him mentally. God helped him score and Tirana win."

Dubious honour...Adriano

Glad to be grey

Baggy trousered...Kiraly

HUNGARIAN GABOR KIRALY may not be one of the best goalkeepers in the world, but he's certainly one of the most recognisable – and it's all down to those baggy grey trousers. "I've tried out more conventional gear," he says, "but I just don't feel comfortable in it."

During his time at Hertha Berlin, the club's kit sponsors, Nike, bowed to his idiosyncratic demands and manufactured a special pair. Likewise, when he plays for Hungary, Adidas kit him out in their baggy greys. But while on loan at Aston Villa this winter, there have been no such privileges and Kiraly has had to delve into his own wardrobe.

Amokachi's men attacked

Former Everton striker Daniel Amokachi is now back in his native Nigeria as coach of Premier League side Nasarawa United and he has steered them into the African Champions League. But his plans for the new season were thrown into disarray after armed robbers attacked the team's training camp.

"Five of our key defenders are seriously hurt," Amokachi said. "Players injured themselves trying to flee the robbers, with many twisting ankles and knees and suffering cuts."

The thieves, who overpowered security guards to make their way in, were believed to be searching for signing-on payments that the players had received recently. Money and mobile phones were stolen.

"I hope this doesn't affect our performance this season because we have prepared very well," Amokachi added.

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Gianluigi Buffon... the Italian federation dropped an investigation into alleged illegal betting by Italy's World Cup-winning goalkeeper.

Henrik Larsson... the 35-year-old Swedish striker scored on his debut for Manchester United against Aston Villa in the FA Cup, increasing the likelihood that his three-month loan will be extended.

On target...Larsson

Eduardo da Silva... the Brazil-born Dinamo Zagreb striker was voted Croatia's Player of the Year.

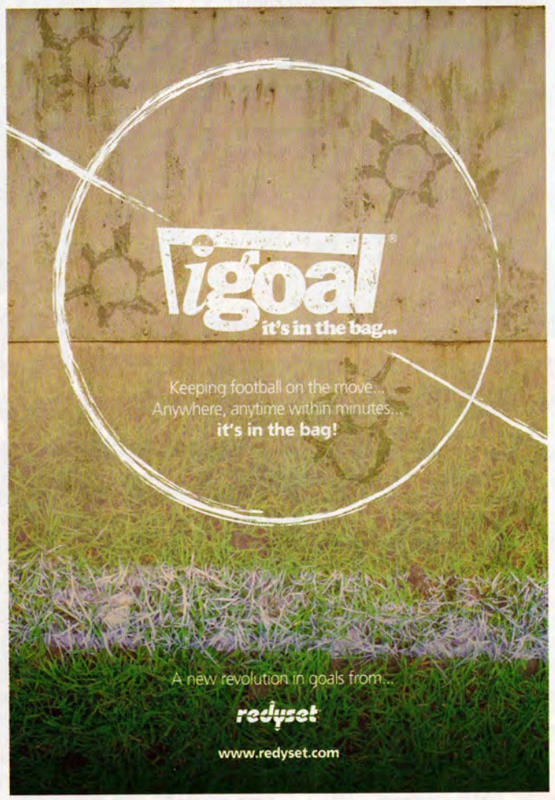
BAD MONTH FOR...

Rino Foschi... Palermo's sporting director received a goat's head in the post as a protest at the team's poor run of results.

Portuguese professionals... the government has announced plans for income tax increases for footballers, prompting player's union president Joaquim Evangelista to threaten calling strikes in protest.

Sidelined...Esposito

Mauro Esposito... the Cagliari winger has been ruled out for the rest of the season with damaged knee ligaments.



● 20/12/06

One-upmanship…Recreativo hail their opening goal in the 3-0 league victory over Real Madrid at the Bernabeu

● 20/12/06

Straight talk…Lord Stevens (right) reveals the findings of his inquiry into alleged transfer bungs in the English game

● 22/12/06

Hola!…Argentinian Fernando Gago gives a wave to the media on his arrival at Real Madrid from Boca Juniors

The English – impatient!

The game would benefit greatly from a more measured, thoughtful approach

WS WORLD SOCCER **Jim Holden**

WATCHING ENGLISH football you get used to the ferocious speed of the play, the senses bombarded by what is colloquially known as 100mph soccer. It is exhilarating and exasperating in equal measure – and what a treasure it is to find a player who can still find time amid the maelstrom "to put his foot on the ball".

Cesc Fabregas at Arsenal and Cristiano Ronaldo at Manchester United have been doing so with wonderful virtuosity through the first half of the Premiership campaign, and pundits have been swift to claim one or the other of these outstanding young talents as the player of the season.

But this rush to judgement is hopelessly premature, the critical equivalent of the 100mph game. How can the player of the season possibly be chosen at the halfway stage? It's quite absurd, of course.

The object for the pundits is to be able to say "I told you so first", and perhaps they will have done. But it can only have been a guess, a hopeful long-ball punt forward into the future.

I guess it's a vain hope that critics might put their foot on the ball. It seems so in the current frenetic English soccer culture, in which even serious newspapers are willing to tell us that clubs can be out of the title race in September after just seven or eight matches.

This is even more foolish. Liverpool and Arsenal may not recover from slow starts to be in the title shake-up this time, but history shows it is quite possible.

The desire to write off clubs so soon is plainly ridiculous, yet the habit is widespread. Why can't we just enjoy the spectacle rather than create so much artificial noise and tension? The effect is damaging to the game. Look, for example, at how the relatively placid Arsene Wenger has responded with intemperate behaviour to autumn crisis headlines – he was even sent off in one match for a verbal tirade at the officials.

A similar lack of patience attended the progress of the bungs inquiry being conducted by former police chief Lord Stevens. His investigation into alleged transfer corruption has inevitably been a slow, painstaking process, but when there was no public naming and shaming by December, the critics said it was a dud.

'In the frenetic English soccer culture, even serious newspapers are willing to tell us that clubs can be out of the title race after just seven or eight matches'

How so? Stevens revealed there were still 17 transfers that looked dodgy, he said he was certain that criminal activity had taken place, and he fiercely criticised the lax financial operation of Premiership clubs in general, calling it "unacceptable". Pundits eager for public villains were disappointed, and Premiership clubs seemed relieved. But the latter ought to have been ashamed by the interim verdict, which is all it was.

Clubs, as eagerly as critics, go rushing to judgement – most notably when results are poor and they sack their managers. Charlton were the clearest example in the Premiership, the team talk at Christmas being given by the third manager of the season after the first two lasted barely a few weeks each. Panic? Of course it was. And from a club that had risen from mediocrity to the top 12 in England during the 15-year reign of previous manager Alan Curbishley.

West Ham also panicked under new Icelandic ownership, incoming chairman Eggert Magnusson sacking Alan Pardew within two weeks, having arrived and given public pledges that he had great faith in the manager.

The Hammers chose Curbishley instead, while Charlton took Pardew. Oh, how dizzy is the 100mph merry-go-round.

English football is far from the worst offender in this regard, though. Impatience rules all over the globe, no matter how much evidence there is to prove that clubs with managerial stability are those that prosper. Look at Manchester United under 20 years of Sir Alex Ferguson. Or Birmingham City, whose owner David Gold kept faith with manager Steve Bruce despite relegation last summer and a sticky start in the division below. By the New Year Bruce's team were six points clear at the top of the table.

Yes, there can be no doubt that the greatest virtue in soccer is the ability to keep your "foot on the ball".

WORLD SOCCER ON THE WEB

THE LATEST NEWS...

THE STRONGEST VIEWS...

at worldsoccer.com

● Brian Glanville's weekly column

● Editor Gavin Hamilton's blog

PLUS news, results and features

Mutton dressed as lamb...despite repeated facelifts, the Maracana remains a crumbling edifice

Complacency rules

Brazilians believe they will easily see off Colombia's rival bid for the 2014 World Cup, but the finals could be taken away from South America altogether

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

SOUTH AMERICA HAS shunned a late bid by Colombia to host the 2014 World Cup and thrown its political weight behind Brazil, the original candidate. The continent's national federations, including Colombia, had unanimously agreed to support Brazil as their only candidate back in 2003, shortly after FIFA had announced its intention to stage the tournament in South America under the new rotation system.

The Colombian federation, under pressure from state president Alvaro Uribe, broke ranks and sent FIFA official confirmation of its interest in hosting the finals just before the official deadline in December. The other federations responded by reaffirming their intention to support the Brazilian bid, effectively leaving Colombia out on a limb.

The Brazilian federation (CBF) trumpeted the decision, giving the impression that the final hurdle had been cleared. There is, however, a much bigger threat to Brazil's ambitions than the surprise Colombian bid. It came from FIFA president Sepp Blatter a few weeks earlier when he said that the finals would "move north" if South America failed to produce a candidate that met the minimum criteria for hosting a World Cup. So far, this has been largely overlooked by the overconfident CBF, which, after four years of bragging, has not even announced how it will choose its proposed venue cities.

Ever since the 2003 agreement, there has been an arrogant air about the Brazilian bid, both from the CBF and certain sections of the media. The idea that Brazil will stage the 2014 finals has been presented as a fait accompli, accompanied by the discourse that the country deserves to be host despite all the shortcomings.

The Colombian bid has been brushed aside with enormous disdain, some commentators gleefully pointing out how their rivals had been awarded the 1986 World Cup only to pull out two years beforehand. However, little mention has been made of Brazil's failed bid to host the 2006 finals, when the CBF embarrassingly withdrew two days before the final vote.

In fact, Brazil has a huge amount of work to do for the 2014 finals and has already wasted four years. The country does not have a single stadium in a suitable condition to host a World Cup match. Brazil boasts many huge stadiums, mostly built between 1950 and 1980, but most are crumbling and in desperate need of repair. The Maracana in Rio de Janeiro is a case in point. Despite seemingly endless refurbishments and revamping, many believe it should be pulled down and put out of its misery.

Away game...Brazil and mascots in London

BRAZIL'S WORLD CUP bid comes at a time when the national team have virtually abandoned their home country. Not only are nearly all the players based in Europe, but also Brazil play nearly all their games there – even against other South American sides, such as Ecuador (in Stockholm) and Argentina (London). Brazil have not played on home soil since their World Cup qualifier against Venezuela in October 2005. They are not likely to play there again until the latter half of this year when the 2010 World Cup qualifiers begin.

Inadequate infrastructure

Brazil's other infrastructure is hopelessly inadequate, and public security is a potential nightmare. The tens of thousands of fans who visited France, Japan/Korea and Germany for the last three World Cups were whisked around by a network of ultra-modern high-speed trains operating with clockwork efficiency. Brazil, by contrast, has virtually abandoned the concept of passenger trains, and the alternatives cannot even cope with local demand.

For example, to go by car or bus from Rio to Salvador, some 1,300km up the coast, involves a 30-hour marathon over bone-crunching, pot-holed roads infested by lunatic drivers who think nothing of overtaking on blind corners to save themselves a few precious seconds. Besides, interstate buses are routinely booked up days in advance ahead of public holidays.

Air transport is barely more enticing. Since October, there have been hundreds of delays and cancellations following a work-to-rule by air traffic controllers, who are widely reported to be underpaid, overworked and using unreliable obsolete equipment.

Hotel accommodation is also in short supply and can barely cope with influxes for Carnival and New Year's Eve let alone a World Cup.

Public safety is an even bigger worry. Many Brazilian cities have shocking crime rates, while Rio and Sao Paulo, among others, are also cursed by gang warfare. Last year, more than 200 people, including police and gangsters, were killed in Sao Paulo during a wave of attacks on banks, police posts and government offices, reportedly by an organised gang known as the First Command of the Capital. In December, 18 people died during similar attacks in Rio. These included an incident in which a bus was torched and seven of the 28 people on board burned to death.

Even on a normal day, Rio is not for the faint-hearted. Armed bandits frequently block the city's expressways (the one leading from the airport to the centre passes through an area full of *favelas* known as the Gaza Strip) and then rob the vehicles that have been forced to stop. Recently, two of Brazil's leading judges were robbed by a gang who stopped their car. The state government's security secretary at the time said it was the judges' fault for not asking for an armed police guard.

'Brazil doesn't have any terrorism, Colombia does, and that's why they haven't a hope for 2014'

Rio de Janeiro's mayor, Cesar Maia, takes a boastful but hardly believable view

Arrogant authorities

Once again, the arrogance of certain authorities and their refusal to recognise the problem really grates. A standard response to serious incidents is "crime exists in all big cities and Rio is no exception". After the sickening bus attack, Rio's mayor, Cesar Maia, criticised state president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for describing it as an act of terrorism. "Brazil doesn't have any terrorism," he boasted. "Colombia does, and that's why they haven't got a hope for 2014."

In fact, Colombia's urban crime rates have been coming down for years and cities such as Bogota, Medellin and Cali are now considered safer than Rio and Sao Paulo. The real problem is in rural Colombia, parts of which are still controlled by guerilla forces.

Item for item, Colombia's bid arguably makes more sense than Brazil's. The country shares Brazil's lack of surface transport options but its air transport is far more organised and compact. And there is a sense the authorities have the political will to get things done.

So far, though, neither country has put forward any concrete plans and FIFA's November deadline, when the world body is due to officially name the host country, is looming large. Both candidates have preferred to go for the unbridled optimism approach, promising that they are capable of rising to the task.

However, Brazil, or at least Rio, has already shown it cannot keep promises. In 1992, it hosted the Earth Summit, having vowed, among other things, to clean up Guanabara Bay. Fifteen years on, the bay is still as polluted as ever. Rio will also stage this year's Pan American Games, which could be seen as a gentle dress rehearsal for the World Cup. On being awarded the Games, Maia made lavish promises, including the building of two new Metro lines to whisk spectators around the city. But so far a mere 650 metres (and one station) has been added to Rio's modest 35km network.

Legal rows have delayed construction of several venues, which will now be ready only on the eve of the Games. The sailing events may have to be axed altogether because the city government has tried to build the facilities in a preserved area and work has been stopped by a court order. Not a good advertisement from a country bidding to host the World Cup.

New year, new crisis

Real Madrid? Real lack of fight, spirit and organisation

SID LOWE
in Madrid

IF REAL MADRID fans thought things could not get any worse, they were wrong. Having signed off from 2006 with a 3-0 hammering by Recreativo Huelva at the Bernabeu, they signed on to 2007 with an even worse performance at Deportivo La Coruna in a 2-0 defeat. And while the team floundered on the pitch, president Ramon Calderon, sporting director Predrag Mijatovic and coach Fabio Capello announced a revolution, sending heads rolling and deepening the sense of crisis.

The loss to Recreativo five days before Christmas was a humiliation. Recre, widely regarded as relegation fodder, though currently in the top half of the table, have the division's smallest budget, at £10million, compared to Madrid's £232m. Yet they didn't just beat Madrid, they absolutely destroyed them.

Even Madrid captain Raul admitted that the margin of defeat should have been greater after Recre's front two, Florent Sinama-Pongolle and Ikechukwu Uche, left World Cup-winning captain and World Player of the Year Fabio Cannavaro looking like someone had put his legs on the wrong way round.

Capello looked a broken man in the post-match conference. Shrugging sadly, he admitted he couldn't understand what had gone wrong, insisted he would have changed all 11 players if he could – even Madrid's traditional saviour, keeper Iker Casillas, had a poor game – and claimed this was the worst he had seen his side play.

"Worse than Getafe?" he was asked. Madrid's 1-0 defeat by the capital's "third" club in October had been described by Casillas as the most inept performance he had experienced in his eight years in the first team. Capello nodded: "Yes, worse than Getafe."

Even the Christmas break failed to rejuvenate the side. Like office workers everywhere, Madrid returned from the holidays in even worse shape. The club had spent £26.2m in the winter transfer window on two Argentinians – striker Gonzalo Higuain and playmaker Fernando Gago, "the new Redondo", right down to the hairstyle – and a Brazilian, left-back Marcelo. Gago was even handed a starting place against Deportivo. But if there is one thing Madrid have proved over the past four years it's that while the names may change, the performance does not.

Crumbling wall... Madrid's players can't stop Joan Capdevila scoring in the defeat at Deportivo

The defeat in La Coruna, where they have now failed to win for 15 years, was bad enough. But the team's showing was simply awful, worse than against Recre and Getafe. It was Madrid's third defeat in four league games and there was, admitted Capello, no fight, no spirit, no determination. Oddly from a Capello team, there was no shape or organisation, either. "If we carry on like this, we're not going anywhere," said Jose Antonio Reyes. There were players, insisted Capello, "who were not, who are not, up to the task".

"100million for this!" screamed the headline of Madrid sports daily *AS*, while Madrid-supporting columnist Tomas Roncero wrote: "I feel conned." *Marca* opted to lead with: "Capello, this is a disaster!" and, inside, asked: "Capello, what are you playing at?"

Defensive and deeply dull

It was a pertinent question. All season Madrid have been accused of being defensive and deeply dull, of winning matches without really deserving to. Defeat, said one columnist, was no surprise: "There have been so many games on the edge of the abyss. This time, Madrid fell in." Yet, however uninspired their football, Madrid had picked up results in the early part of the season – and, it seemed, in a way that pleased Capello. Moreover, in a way that seemed to be within his control. You could love him or loathe him, but things did tend to go as he had predicted.

But recently they have not. Capello has not been the Capello of old and there is a growing feeling that he has started to lose his grip. What he says no longer has the uncanny knack of coming true.

After a dull 0-0 draw at home to Villarreal in the opening game of the season, he insisted he needed 50 days before people saw the real Madrid, the Madrid he wanted. Exactly 50 days later came the debacle at Getafe. When, in the summer, Capello demanded the signing of Mali midfielder Mahamadou Diarra from Lyon, he told Calderon: "With Diarra and Emerson together we won't lose more than three games all season." The defeat by Deportivo was their fifth in the League and Madrid were also hammered by Lyon in the Champions League.

Meanwhile, the players have privately admitted that Capello barely talks to them and, worse still, he has even stopped shouting at them. That can't be right. A Capello that does not shout is not Capello at all. Against Deportivo, he sat motionless on the bench offering few instructions, let alone one of his trademark rants.

Stop it...Diogo is held after fighting Luis Fabiano

SEVILLA'S Brazilian striker Luis Fabiano and Zaragoza's Uruguayan defender Carlos Diogo were both banned for five matches following their fight after the final whistle of a recent league match. Fabiano claimed that Diogo stamped on his hand and insulted him, provoking a reaction that escalated into an exchange of butts and punches.

The situation at the club, the vices of the galactico era, appear to have overwhelmed the Italian – the lack of team spirit, the lack of effort in training, the lack of commitment, the lack of professionalism. When one player turned up late for training, still drunk from the night before, Capello could not believe what he was seeing. For their part, the players are still far from united, except in one thing: they're simply not enjoying their football. "It's like the ball burns our feet," one has admitted.

For Calderon, the situation could not be worse. Potential presidents are circling the club like vultures while a judge's final decision has still to be made about whether or not to open the currently-embargoed postal votes from last summer's election. If they are opened, it could change the result, forcing Calderon to give way, or at least prompt a re-run. As a consequence, the president is permanently in campaigning mode.

Desperate attempt

He is for ever visiting supporters' clubs, shooting his mouth off, prompting "spontaneous" displays of support, with banners declaring him the man who will put the club back on their feet – all in a desperate attempt to build himself a power base, a groundswell of support. The last thing he needs is a disaster for the team.

This is why he reacted as he did. Rather than just allow Madrid to work through their difficulties, Calderon called a very public crisis meeting. The message was clear: "We'll sort this out, just watch us!" Calderon, Mijatovic and Capello met at the Bernabeu and resolved to do what they failed to do during the summer – really root out the vices of the past. To do something decisive and, more importantly, to be seen to do it.

What they did was seek scapegoats. Antonio Cassano, Ronaldo and David Beckham were left out of the squad for Madrid's next game after the Deportivo defeat – a cup tie against Real Betis. It was a clear statement of intent. To lump Beckham so publicly with the club's two most obvious slackers, the two tubbies, was unfair, but the message, after Beckham had stalled on contract talks, was clear – from now on, the players must show total commitment. The revolution has started and has begun with heads rolling – two of the biggest in world football at that. If galacticism had been just clinging to life, it really is dead and buried now.

'There are players here who were not, and who are not, up to the task'

Madrid coach Fabio Capello does not mince his words

Up in arms... Fenerbahce fans stage a candle-lit demonstration against Ulusoy, the federation and the bribery allegations outside the club's Sukru Saracoglu stadium

Power and corruption

The federation and top club Fenerbahce are locked in a bitter fight in the midst of a swathe of bribery and match-fixing allegations

SUNA ERDEM in Istanbul

LAST SUMMER, Turkey miserably sat out the World Cup, in which they had been semi-finalists just four years before. But amid all the scandal and kerfuffle that characterised the domestic game in 2006, the shame of failure was hardly noted.

The year began with a post-mortem of Turkey's undignified and violent exit from the World Cup qualifiers in the play-off against Switzerland. There then followed a row about alleged corruption within the leadership of the federation (TFF) and a protest by referees tired of abuse by players and fans, interspersed with repeated media reports of past scandals in the domestic game.

By December, fans' eyes were glazing over when confronted with yet more headlines exhorting an Italian-style investigation into increasing allegations of match-fixing and bribery. But there is little hope that such a probe could get off the ground here.

The catalogue of alleged misdemeanours past and present touched all parts of the game. But the latest, most colourful and most specific charges were directed against the biggest, richest club, Fenerbahce. In November, restaurant owner and part-time journalist Cihan Oskay claimed, among other things, that Fenerbahce chairman Aziz Yildirim gave him £75,000 to bribe Samsunspor to throw their game against Fener to ensure the latter won the league title in 2001.

As the new year kicks off, it looks as if the tumultuous reign of federation president Haluk Ulusoy could soon be over after Bursaspor chairman Levent Kizil organised the submission of over 100 petitions calling for a TFF congress and election. They have the government's tacit backing – for the past year it has been urging the federation to choose a new leader amid accusations that Ulusoy's now seven-and-a-half-year tenure in two spells has been characterised by corruption on an unprecedented scale.

But Ulusoy, triumphantly returned to power last January against a government-backed candidate, has been defiant throughout, refusing to move at least until the conclusion of investigations into financial irregularities during his time in office. "I am still in charge…Yes, there is a case against me…But nobody should be branded guilty just because they have been taken to court," he said. "It is so easy to sue people in this country. Unfortunately, in the year since I was elected, there has been unabated harassment."

For months Ulusoy has been dodging barbs from Sports Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin. "Respectable delegates of the clubs are aware that things are getting worse and want a congress convened; I am also waiting for this," Sahin said recently. "It will be much smarter if the board does this itself. Haluk Ulusoy and his colleagues should respond to the accusations and seek a vote of confidence."

Sahin has the right to call an emergency TFF congress, even though sports federations have administrative and financial autonomy. For the moment, though, he appears to be biding his time in the hope that the federation will implode.

It well might. Ulusoy is currently fighting on two fronts, since Oskay's claims have helped reignite a bitter rivalry between the president and Yildirim, one of those backing Kizil's bid to have Ulusoy replaced. "Ulusoy talked about change when he came to office, but I see clearly now he was not telling the truth," Yildirim said.

Oskay's allegations about the Samsun-Fener match came during a television interview when he said he was given a total of £200,000 by Yildirim to fix games in the 2000-01 season. He said that, while attempting to fix a game involving Trabzonspor, he visited a player of that club, Oktay Derelioglu, and spread banknotes on his hotel bed. Oskay provided taped telephone conversations as evidence on the programme. Derelioglu denies the claim.

Hate figure...Oskay

AFTER MAKING his allegations, Cihan Oskay explained why he had spoken out now. "I have been having nightmares for the past five years," he said. "I always thought what I did was for the sake of Fenerbahce, but realised later that I was being used. I have totally lost interest in soccer, that's why I have come to confess." But rather than being feted, as he had hoped, Oskay has become a national hate figure and is accused of all kinds of crimes, from fraud to money laundering. "If the Pope had been assassinated [during his visit to Turkey] they would have blamed me," he added ruefully.

Attack on federation

After the programme, Yildirim called a media conference during which he denied the charges but spent most of the time attacking Ulusoy's federation. He called for a state probe into the allegations because he felt the federation could not be trusted. "This is a conspiracy. Since the federation is involved, the issue cannot be left to it," Yildirim said. "The state must resolve this without delay."

He claimed to have been warned months ago he would be the target of a dirty plot, talked of TFF officials frequenting nightclubs with referees, and demanded Oskay be given state protection, saying: "I fear he could be harmed and then I will get all the blame."

The TFF, which says the statute of limitations precludes any punishment for Fenerbahce since the alleged bribery took place more than three years ago, responded by suspending Yildirim from football-related activities for a year (later reduced to five months) for harming the federation's reputation.

But the Fenerbahce boss still has great clout, and benefits from the fact that his adversary is not liked in the capital, Ankara. Also, Fenerbahce enjoy the support of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, who once played semi-professionally and nearly had a trial with the club.

As for Ulusoy, the *Vatan* newspaper recently published an article about him under the headline "Ulu-SON" – the Turkish word *"son"* means "the end" – and which chronicled what it sees as his inevitable downfall. But the anti-corruption campaigners are not getting excited just yet – a new election in itself will not necessarily alter anything for the better if it is a mere changing of the guard without any hard-hitting investigations and reforms.

Also, the inevitability of corruption in football has been accepted by Turks to such a degree that nobody is clamouring for a serious clean-up since it might topple their own team.

With organised crime infiltrating the increasingly lucrative game for the past two decades, most if not all recent championships are believed to be tainted. When allegations surface, they are reburied, and even when punishments are meted out, they are then reduced. Last year, Trabzonspor and national team midfielder Gokdeniz Karadeniz admitted accepting Albanian mafia bribes to turn matches. He received a shorter-than-expected six-month ban and was then welcomed back by club and country.

So the revelations of the past year – which also include a report of a club chairman threatening his own players with a gun if they win – are being seen as little more than confirmation of endemic corruption rather than as tools for reform.

What of the football? Turkey failed to qualify for the last European Championship as well as the World Cup and are currently playing home competitive matches behind closed doors as part of the punishment for the violence against Switzerland. They won their first three Euro 2008 qualifiers, though against less-than-formidable opposition. Meanwhile, there is still a lack of success on the continental club scene. It all goes to confirm the cynics' view that the question is not "What went wrong after the World Cup success?", but rather "How on earth did things manage to go right long enough for Turkey to achieve World Cup success?"

'In the year since I was elected, there has been unabated harassment'

Federation president Haluk Ulusoy protests at campaigns against him

CLUB GUIDE

2 BURSASPOR
Won the Cup in 1986 and are back in the Super League after relegation in 2004. This generally steady club are in the spotlight as chairman Levent Kizil leads the fight to topple the federation leadership.

3 FENERBAHCE
The Chelsea of Turkey, loaded with money and bravado. In their centenary year, the club are looking to regain the league title they lost to Galatasaray at the last gasp last term. Fener, coached by Zico, are situated on the Asian side of the Bosphorus.

4 GALATASARAY
The other dominant force in Turkish football, along with Fenerbahce, whom they pipped to the title last season. Became the first Turkish club to win a European trophy, the UEFA Cup in 2000, and also provided the backbone of Turkey's successful World Cup side in 2002, but such successes are proving hard to match.

5 BESIKTAS
The oldest league club and the third of Istanbul's Big Three. Won the title in 2003, their centenary, but those days are long gone and coach Jean Tigana is regularly rumoured to be on his way out.

6 SAKARYASPOR
Used to be a breeding ground for top talent – international striker Hakan Sukur had his formative years there – and currently have former league top scorer Okan Yilmaz on board. However, having regained their top division status last season, they are facing a fight to stay up.

7 GENCLERBIRLIGI
Struggling to match their success of the 2002-03 season, when they finished third in the league and went on to reach the fourth round of the UEFA Cup the following season. Even so, the Ankara side are firmly established in the top flight.

8 ANKARASPOR
Ambitious chairman Melih Gokcek, who is also mayor of Ankara, the capital, has turned the former unfancied Ankara Greater Municipality club into a vehicle for his dreams. Recently relaunched them as Ankaraspor with a sleek leopard design on their crest.

1 MANISASPOR
Minnows who shocked everyone earlier this season by topping the table in just their second top-flight campaign. Coach Ersun Yanal, who had an unsuccessful spell with the national team, has shown he is much better working at club level.

9 ANKARAGUCU
The third team from Ankara. They have won the Cup twice – in 1972 and 1981.

10 KAYSERISPOR
Made their first entry into Europe this season – in the InterToto Cup then UEFA Cup – after finishing fifth last term.

18 DENIZLISPOR
Recently sacked Bosnian coach Faruk Hadzibegic. His replacement, Mehmet Kulaksizoglu, used to be assistant to national coach Senol Gunes. The new man has promised Denizlispor will be more aggressive.

17 ANTALYASPOR
The newly-promoted Mediterranean team recently caused a stir when announcing that Sedat Peker had been elected chairman – until the media realised that the new man was NOT the underworld leader of the same name.

15 GAZIANTEPSPOR
The first Turkish team to sign African players, starting a league-wide trend.

16 KONYASPOR
Middle-ranking team who have failed to get the most out of talented but difficult midfielder Okan Koc.

14 RIZESPOR
Scored only 14 goals in their 17 league games in the autumn. But new coach Riza Calimbay's search for a much-needed striker faltered when potential signing Brazilian Livonir Ruschel Tuto failed to convince his family to quit his homeland.

13 TRABZONSPOR
The Black Sea club are the only team apart from the Istanbul Big Three to have won the title, managing it six times in the late 1970s and early 80s. They have since failed to make a serious challenge. Star forward Fatih Tekke recently left for Russia's Zenit St Petersburg.

12 SIVASSPOR
The eastern team enjoy a huge following in Istanbul thanks to the mass migration there from Sivas and its surrounding region. The club are in danger of losing highly-rated international defender Servet Cetin.

11 ERCIYESSPOR
Kayseri's second team have former Fenerbahce technical director Werner Lorant in charge, but he has yet to work any wonders on these whipping boys.

WHO'S WHO

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN TURKISH SOCCER

● **HALUK ULUSOY** – the federation chief's position is in danger now he has picked a fight with the government. The hotel owner and son of a transport, tourism and textile magnate has presided over Turkish football for a total of seven and a half years in two spells. The first included the country's successful 2002 World Cup campaign, when Ulusoy prided himself on personally motivating the team as they reached the semi-finals. Returned to the helm at the start of last year after an 18-month break.

Haluk Ulusoy

Fatih Terim

● **FATIH TERIM** – loud, belligerent, talismanic coach, now in his second spell at the national team helm. Has legendary status after lifting Turkey from sick men of Europe to Euro 96 finalists and steering Galatasaray to win the 2000 UEFA Cup, the first time a Turkish club had won a continental trophy. His reputation survived a brief, unsuccessful stint in Serie A, with Fiorentina and Milan, and a failed return to Galatasaray, but missing out on Euro 2008 would surely tarnish the image of the man they call "The Emperor".

● **AZIZ YILDIRIM** – construction engineer and businessman who has been chairman of Fenerbahce since 1998. Regularly announces his impending resignation only to change his mind in the face of "an irresistible wave of support". His flagship project has been the expansion of Fener's Sukru Saracoglu stadium, which makes it one of the best in the country. Has a penchant for signing expensive foreign players, who then fail to deliver. Currently serving a five-month suspension from football-related activities after he publicly accused the federation of dirty tricks.

Senes Erzik

● **SENES ERZIK** – the first Turk to become a UEFA vice-president and he is also on FIFA's executive committee. Erzik tends to keep out of the numerous public rows in Turkish football, and his name regularly comes up in wish lists for the new federation president, a post he held in 1989.

Hakan Sukur (in white)

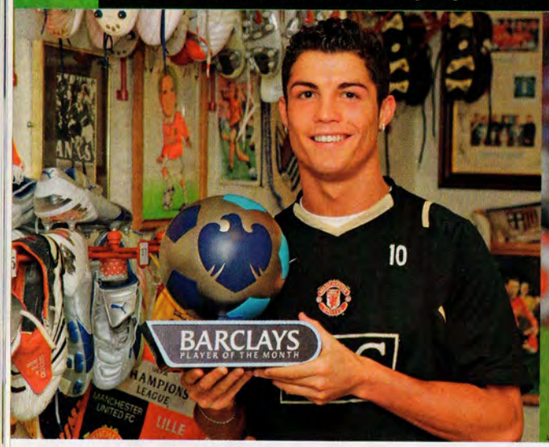
Aziz Yildirim

● **HAKAN SUKUR** – the veteran striker and prolific goalscorer remains a fixture in the Galatasaray and Turkey line-ups almost regardless of form, which has, incidentally, improved of late. He certainly outlasted Ersun Yanal, the one national team coach who decided it was time to change the guard but was soon sacked.

● **MELIH GOKCEK** – Ankara's mayor is increasingly turning to football to further his ambitions, which are said to include becoming federation president and even Prime Minister. Defied criticism of his use of municipality funds to help bring former no-hopers Ankaraspor into the Super League.

● **SANSAL BUYUKA & ERMAN TOROGLU** – influential television duo: Buyuka, the well-connected veteran who founded football channel Lig TV; and Toroglu, a sharp-tongued former referee and commentator whose *Maraton* programme is the big draw on match nights. A year ago the pair fought off an attempt to have their programmes axed by an unsympathetic new management. Separately, Toroglu's comment that he would not eat chicken because it was full of hormones crippled the industry for a while.

Talent at work…Ronaldo beats City keeper Andreas Isaksson in the Manchester derby, while, below, he displays his Premiership player of the month award, takes on Benfica and celebrates a goal against Fulham



Keir Radnedge hails Manchester United's in-form player, while over the next six pages, *World Soccer* writers profile eight other young stars tipped to make an impact on the world stage over the next 12 months

CRISTIANO RONALDO

In the footsteps of Best and Cantona

GEORGE BEST, Bryan Robson, Eric Cantona and David Beckham all wore Manchester United's No 7 shirt with individualistic distinction. All were utterly different in style, outlook and persona. To find another jewel to carry such a magic number has been one of the most remarkable achievements in the long reign of Sir Alex Ferguson.

Cristiano Ronaldo Santos Aveiro flies with the seven now – and probably for a long time to come since he is not yet 22. He could well become the 10th foreign player to win England's Footballer of the Year award if United keep their Premiership noses ahead of Chelsea and his most potent rival, Didier Drogba.

The Ivory Coast striker, for all his attacking aggression, has not had to confront the crowd antagonism on away grounds provoked by the nod-and-a-wink antics that the Portuguese contributed to the expulsion of club-mate Wayne Rooney at the World Cup.

Ferguson should not be given all the credit for bringing Ronaldo to Old Trafford. True, United, along with half of the rest of Europe, had been watching him every time Sporting Lisbon played. But it was only after Sporting beat United 3-1 in a friendly in 2003 that Ferguson was persuaded to do business.

"On the flight back our players urged me to sign him and then for a week after the match they still talked about him constantly," he recalled. "That is how highly they rate him. He is not only a two-footed attacker who can play anywhere up front – right, left or through the middle – but he is also one of the most exciting young players I have ever seen."

'He runs with the ball at such speed it is difficult for defenders to handle' *Alex Ferguson*

United's partnership with Sporting gave them first refusal on Ronaldo. But they still had to pay £12million – a remarkable fee for a player of just 18 – to shake off the pursuit of Real Madrid, Juventus and Chelsea.

Ferguson said: "We had been interested for some time but in the last few weeks interest from other clubs accelerated and something had to be sorted out."

Ronaldo was born in Funchal, Madeira, on February 5, 1985. His father was kit manager for local side CF Andorinha. At 10 the boy was already so good that he was the subject of a "transfer bid" from leading Madeira club Maritimo. Ronaldo's father chose Sporting instead because they offered Andorinha a full new first-team kit.

So Ronaldo joined Sporting's youth school, which had produced stars such as Luis Figo, Paulo Futre and Simao Sabrosa. He says: "When I was a kid Figo was my hero, so it was wonderful to be able to play for the same club. It was a dream come true."

However, he did not adjust easily to life in Lisbon. At school, for instance, the other pupils laughed at his Madeira accent. But Ronaldo had the last laugh when, at 17 years, eight months and two days, he became the youngest league goalscorer in Sporting's history.

Less than a year later and he was at his scintillating best on his United debut as a first-half substitute in a 4-0 win over Bolton. Ferguson said afterwards: "It looks like the fans have a new hero. It was a marvellous debut, almost unbelievable. There is no doubt Cristiano can become the best player in the world. He has everything really, and in terms of players who can attack defenders at speed, no one in Europe comes close.

"There are some central midfield players, like Kaka and Ronaldinho, who can attack from central areas and are very good at it. But they are world-class players anyway. Ronaldo is in that bracket now. He runs with the ball at such incredible speed it is not easy for defenders to handle him."

Initially, Ronaldo was presented as a right-winger and he caused a sensation with his multi-stepovers. Of course, the carping soon began – he was too selfish on the ball, too much the individualist and, worst of all, went far too readily to ground.

But within 18 months United's coaching staff had developed greater use of his left foot, taught him decisive heading skills and persuaded him to release the ball with greater alacrity.

His progress kept Ferguson happy. The manager noted: "He is learning the game of football now, when to pass and when to hold. The whole variety of his game has changed. All of a sudden he seems to be able to grasp all the things we have been telling him."

Ronaldo was not quite at his best when Portugal hosted Euro 2004 – or they would have won instead of finishing runners-up to Greece – but he went into last year's World Cup with increased confidence born of that experience.

So to the controversial quarter-final against England, when first Ronaldo waved an imaginary card at referee Horacio Elizondo before winking at the bench after Rooney was shown red.

Those gestures were picked up by the cameras, to be shown repeatedly by English television as Portugal moved on to the semi-finals and, ultimately, fourth place. At one stage Ronaldo's return to English football was in doubt, even more so when he was named as a target of Real Madrid by one of the club's presidential candidates.

For a while he considered not coming back to Manchester. He says: "After the World Cup things were very difficult for me because I played my club football in England. Suddenly, I had to think a lot about my future – which I had not expected at that stage in my career. At any moment I could have gone, but then I put that thought out of my mind, and now I know it was the right decision." So does Ferguson, so do United and their fans.

ALEXANDRE PATO

Like the young Ronaldo

INTERNACIONAL'S Alexandre Pato passed from obscurity to stardom in the space of 58 minutes late last November. That is the length of time the slight 17-year-old was on the field in a sensational debut away to Palmeiras in the penultimate round of the Brazilian championship.

Inter, who specialise in producing young talent, had known they had something special but had kept quiet about it, even asking the first-team players not to mention Alexandre's superb training displays in interviews. Then, after securing him on a new contract, they unleashed him. The teenager scored in the first minute against Palmeiras and set up two more goals in the first half to put Inter on the way to a 4-1 victory.

Alexandre picked up a knock that forced his substitution and put him out of the final round game. But his showing had been so devastating that he was suddenly being hailed as Inter's biggest hope of glory at the Club World Cup a fortnight later. Just before Inter's first game in Japan, the semi-final against Egypt's Al Ahly, team-mate Iarley said Alexandre was "very reminiscent of Ronaldo" – who also made his name as a skinny 17-year-old – "because of his pace and dribbling ability. And he's good in the air. Finishing comes easily to him because he's calm by nature."

His words were borne out when the youngster opened the scoring against the African champions with a goal that required both a cool head and a sniper's precision. In the process, Alexandre became the youngest player to score at a senior FIFA finals, at 17 years 102 days.

'His goal against Al Ahly required a cool head and a sniper's precision'

The kid also produced some show-stopping ball-juggling on his right shoulder and moved with the fluency of the truly gifted as Inter ran out 2-1 winners. His lack of games took its toll as he went off with cramp in the 65th minute. But he was back in the starting line-up for the Final victory against Barcelona, when he again made way after an hour.

There should be no problems with match fitness this year since Inter will want to get plenty of use out of him before the inevitable move to Europe. As well as the Libertadores Cup defence, the club will also be looking to finally win the Brazilian title having finished second twice running.

But Alexandre's first big test of the year is with Brazil's Under-20s as they compete at the South American Championship in Paraguay this month. As usual, the top four sides will qualify for the World Youth Cup, but this time around the top two sides will also qualify for the Olympics, the one title Brazil have never won. Alexandre can expect nine pressure games in 22 days, played in intense heat. It is a warm welcome to the type of workload he will face for years to come.

Tim Vickery

JAN SCHLAUDRAFF

Fired up for Bayern move

WHAT BAYERN MUNICH want, Bayern Munich tend to get. Werder Bremen, Borussia Dortmund, Bayer Leverkusen and several other German sides might have harboured hopes of persuading highly-rated Alemannia Aachen striker Jan Schlaudraff to throw in his lot with them. But no one packs as much financial and sporting clout in the Bundesliga as Bayern, and it was with a certain inevitability that the Bavarians announced during the winter break that the 23-year-old would be joining them in July in a three-year deal worth £4.3million in wages.

It could have all been so different if Schlaudraff had not made the most of the second chance he got after illness put his career on hold. At his first professional club, Borussia Monchengladbach, he was sidelined for 11 months in the 2003-04 season with a viral condition. Unable to make an impact on the rare occasion when he was selected for the first team, the youngster was offloaded to Alemannia, then in the second division, for a giveaway £100,000 in January 2005.

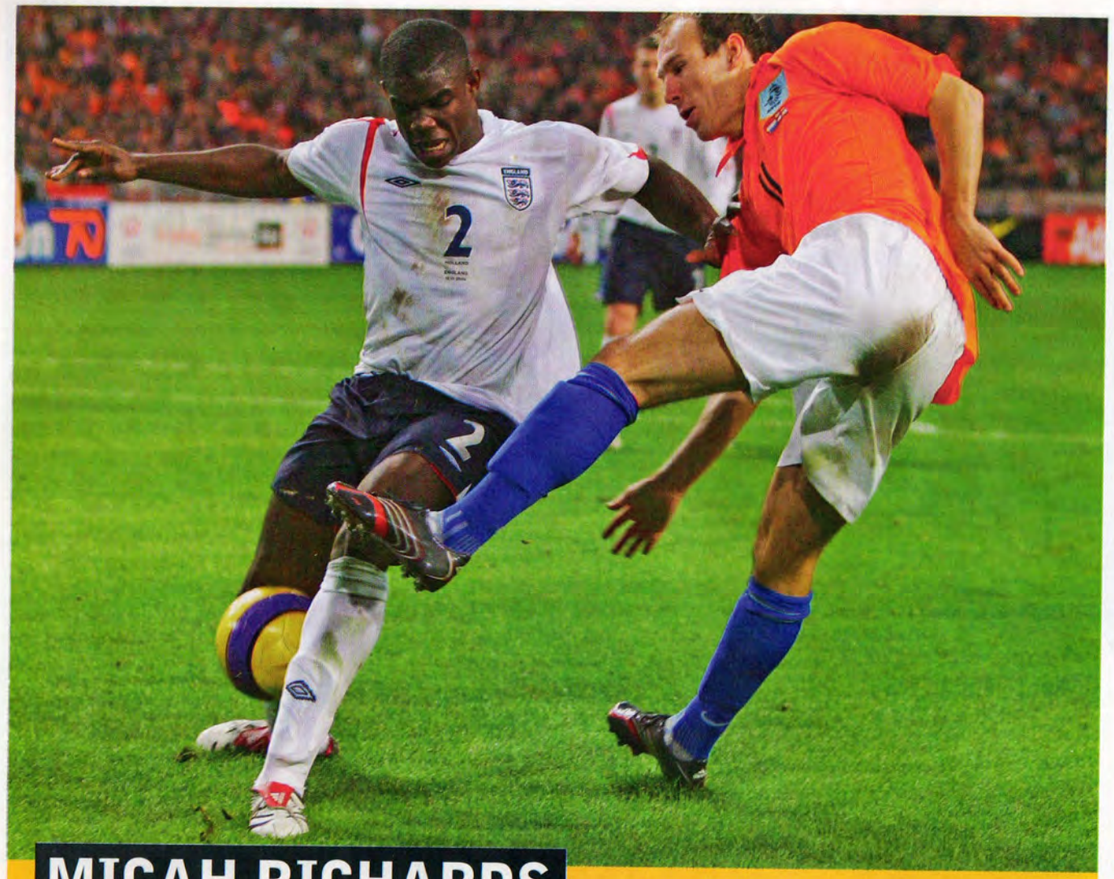
'He's a clever and aware striker, quick and direct' *Germany coach Joachim Low*

Schlaudraff, the son of a parish priest, quickly set about achieving footballing redemption in the Rhineland frontier city, amassing 11 goals last season to help Alemannia win promotion to the top flight for the first time. This term he has been one of the Bundesliga's best performers, netting seven goals and making a further four.

He scored a particularly memorable solo effort in the 2-2 draw against Werder in November – a brilliant slalom through the defence followed by a precise chip over keeper Tim Wiese.

Schlaudraff won a first senior cap in the October 2-0 friendly win against Georgia, just reward for his excellent efforts this autumn. Germany boss Joachim Low believes that the forward will get even better after the move to Bavaria. "Jan will benefit greatly from working with all the top-class talent at Bayern," Low says. "There's huge competition for starting places there but I'm sure he'll pick up the gauntlet. He's a clever and aware striker, quick and direct, and can cause lots of damage with his terrific dribbling. He's more than ready for that next step up."

Nick Bidwell



MICAH RICHARDS

England defender schooled the Brazilian way

IN JUST OVER a year, Micah Richards has risen from virtual unknown to full England international and got the pundits purring about his qualities. But though the Manchester City 18-year-old has made his mark at right-back, that's not the full story of this precocious talent.

"We first tried Micah out as a defender, but he didn't do too well," says City's academy director Jim Cassell. "My first impressions were that he looked like he'd be a good athlete, but he was slightly clumsy and very, very uncomfortable with the ball."

This view was shared by Angus Martin, a coach at the Brazilian Soccer School in Leeds, Richards' home city. "He wasn't miles ahead of the rest of the group, technically," Martin says. "But he was physically strong and had great character. His dad, Lincoln, was with him all the time and he gave his son both guidance and discipline. There were never any complaints from Micah when you asked him to do something. His commitment was amazing."

This commitment was evident as Richards put in many extra hours honing his skills and improving his fitness at the soccer school even after hooking up with first Oldham Athletic and then City as a 14-year-old.

"Once he got into our training programme it became very clear that Micah would be a good, competitive player," Cassell says. "His energy level was superb, his ability to leap for headers was outstanding and he had a real eye for goal. We actually saw him as a box-to-box midfielder."

'He put in many extra hours honing his skills and improving his fitness'

But he made his full senior City debut at right-back against Charlton in February last year, and it's been in that position he has blossomed. In November, he made his senior England debut in the 1-1 friendly draw away to Holland.

"Micah had an excellent debut, gave a mature performance and has great potential for the future," said England boss Steve McClaren. Where that potential will be fulfilled is still open to debate.

Richards has been turning out in the City midfield of late to help the club through an injury crisis. Cassell says: "His natural position could be in central defence. A lot of boys go into the first team in wide positions to start with, but Micah is a great man-to-man marker and he's excellent in the air."

What can stop Richards, then? Letting his rapid rise go to his head, maybe? Not according to Martin and Cassell.

"Micah keeps in touch with the Brazilian Soccer School and is still the same nice lad from before," Martin says.

Cassell agrees: "[City manager] Stuart Pearce is constantly reminding Micah about keeping his feet on the floor. But whenever I've spoken to him lately he seems the same lad he's always been."

Howard Johnson

ALBERTO AQUILANI

Complete midfielder at the heart of Roma

FOR THE PAST couple of decades, Roma fans have become used to worshipping homegrown midfielders, players who have turned from childhood fan at the Stadio Olimpico to star turn in the first team. Giuseppe Giannini, the playmaker of the 1980s and 90s, and current idols Francesco Totti and Daniele De Rossi all fit into that school, and Alberto Aquilani looks as if he will too.

The youngster has not stopped making progress since returning to Roma after a loan spell at Serie B Triestina in 2003-04. So much so that he is now the complete midfielder, an exciting package of energy, tactical discipline, technical refinement and natural flair. Equally evident is Aquilani's big-match temperament. Pressure situations bring out the best in the 22-year-old, the most notable examples being his goal in the derby win over Lazio last term and the audacious pass – crossing his legs to flick the ball with the back foot – that initiated the move which led to Totti heading home the winner at Milan earlier this season, Roma's first victory at the San Siro for 20 years. Even Brazilians would have been proud of such cheeky skill.

'Pressure situations bring out the best in the youngster'

Aquilani has also graced the international stage for several years. He was a key figure in the Italian Under-19 side that walked away with the European Championship spoils in 2003 and in the Under-21s, and it was no surprise when senior team boss Roberto Donadoni gave him his first cap in the 1-1 friendly draw with Turkey in Bergamo last November. Donadoni, prone to understatements, described him as an "interesting" prospect. He can say that again.

Nick Bidwell

IBRAHIM AFELLAY

Playmaker who revs up the PSV attack

WHEN DUTCH CHAMPIONS PSV Eindhoven sold their entire midfield engine room in summer 2005 – Mark Van Bommel, Park Ji-sung and Johann Vogel – many thought it was tantamount to running up the white flag. Not so. With homegrown Ibrahim Afellay emerging as one of the most accomplished young players on the continent, PSV have sailed on majestically, going on to claim another league title and reaching the Champions League knockout stages for the second consecutive year.

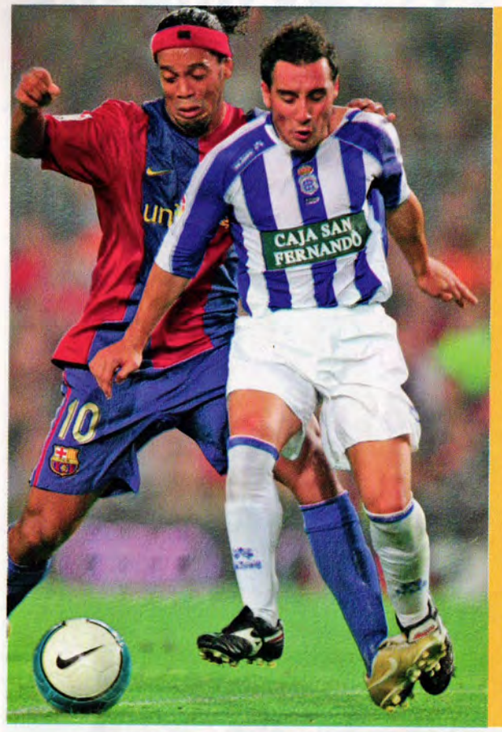
'The 20-year-old is blessed with vision and a stinging shot'

For all the vast experience of Phillip Cocu and Timmy Simons, it is 20-year-old Afellay who sets the Eindhoven attacking machinery in motion. He is a born playmaker, blessed with vision, accurate distribution, fine set-piece delivery and a stinging shot. Afellay also has a good workrate and is level-headed.

Born in Holland to Moroccan immigrant parents, he must soon decide which flag to wrap around himself as a senior international. While Afellay has served the Dutch colours with distinction at Under-20 level, he has been assiduously courted by the Moroccan federation and seems genuinely torn between the two countries. Holland coach Marco Van Basten was ready to pick him for last November's friendly against England, only for Afellay to ask for more time to reflect on the matter.

This battle of the passports has sparked much sound and fury. Moroccans claim Afellay is coming under heavy pressure from PSV to pledge himself to the "Oranje" cause; PSV accuse the Moroccans of offering cash inducements. There is bound to be a sore loser.

Nick Bidwell



SANTI CAZORLA

Giving Recreativo the Ronaldinho touch

NOT FOR NOTHING is little wide midfielder Santi Cazorla known as Recreativo's answer to Ronaldinho. The pair have much in common: the toothy grin, the laid-back personalities and the virtuoso ball-skills.

Cazorla has a dual mission this season after being declared surplus to requirements by Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini and loaned out to the newly-promoted Huelva side in the summer – proving his old boss wrong and helping Recreativo push for an unexpected UEFA Cup qualification spot.

'He's versatile and can make chances out of nothing' *Team-mate Pablo Amo*

There have been few weekends this season when the 22-year-old's magic on the right flank, his speed of thought and foot, perfect balance and unrivalled creativity have not illuminated La Liga. Recreativo goalgetters Florent Sinama-Pongolle and Ikechukwu Uche must be thanking the heavens for the outstanding service he provides.

"Cazorla is definitely a player of international class," says Recreativo defender Pablo Amo. "On the ball, he is as talented as anyone, he can make chances out of nothing, and he's so versatile. He's doing superbly for us on the flank but he could do a fantastic job as a midfield organiser or up front. Crucially, he's also a very hungry player. Those who thought we were in for a relegation struggle were not counting on the likes of him."

If Cazorla, a native of the Asturias region of northern Spain and product of the Oviedo academy, maintains such high standards it can only be a matter of time before he makes the transition from Spanish Under-21 to full international.

Nick Bidwell

FABRICE MUAMBA

Vieira-style England youth international

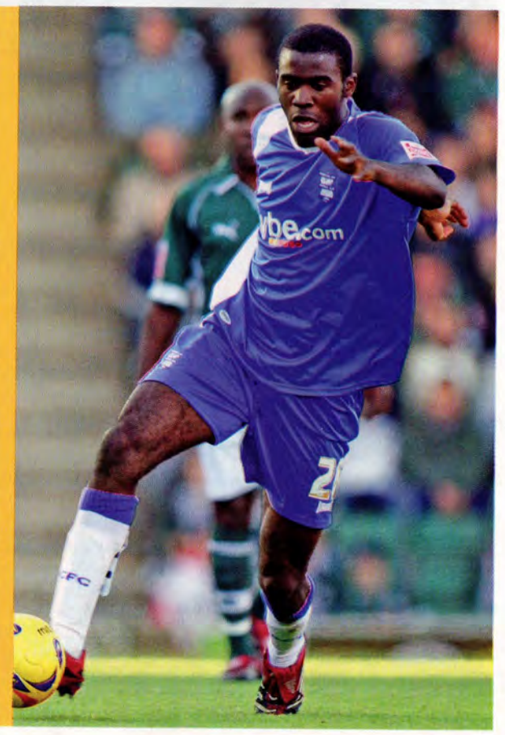
ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP pacesetters Birmingham City are reaping the benefits of the pioneering global scouting network put in place at Arsenal by manager Arsene Wenger. Indeed, the Blues have no fewer than three players on loan from the Gunners – Danish striker Nicklas Bendtner, Swedish utility player Sebastian Larsson and DR Congo-born defensive midfielder Fabrice Muamba – and all have contributed greatly to the team's success this season. But with all due respect to his Scandinavian team-mates, Muamba may just be the pick of the bunch.

In fact, there is sufficient reason to depict the 18-year-old as the heir apparent to former Arsenal captain Patrick Vieira. Muamba has the same imposing physical presence, ball-winning steel, pace and feel for danger, plus ultra-competitiveness and the desire to drive forward with the ball at his feet. The English second tier may not be of the highest quality. But given Muamba's superior football intelligence and power, he should have no problem making his way in the Premiership.

'There's the same steel and pace as the ex-Arsenal captain'

The teenager, born in Kinshasa, first pitched up in England in 1999 when his family fled the civil war in his homeland. After starring in schoolboy football in north-east London, he earned a place in the Arsenal academy and impressed sufficiently to be offered a professional contract in July 2004. His first-team debut came 15 months later, giving a very convincing performance in a League Cup tie against Sunderland. Now a naturalised UK citizen, Muamba has represented England at Under-16, 17 and 19 levels.

Nick Bidwell



CARLOS VELA

Mexican star creating a stir on loan at Salamanca

SPANISH NEWSPAPER *Marca* recently labelled Carlos Vela "the new Hugo Sanchez", and certainly there are similarities between the Mexicans: the teenager is a forward currently playing in Spain, with Salamanca – just as his compatriot used to at Real Madrid – he has black curly hair, wears the No 9 shirt and has the happy knack of imposing himself on games. But in playing style, Vela is actually much closer to Barcelona's Argentinian starlet Lionel Messi.

The youngster, who will be 18 on March 1, made a name for himself last year at the Under-17 World Championship, where his Golden Boot-winning tally of five goals went a long way to bringing the team the trophy, Mexico's first world title at any age level.

Not surprisingly, Vela's amazing pace, finishing ability and versatility attracted the attention of several top European sides. But it was Arsenal who showed most conviction, snapping him up from leading Mexican club Guadalajara – for whom Vela never made a first-team appearance – on a five-year contract.

Although FIFA regulations prevent the inter-continental transfers of under-18s, Guadalajara insist Arsenal paid a substantial sum for Vela. "Arsenal have already paid the full transfer fee," said president Jorge Vergara. "I don't have the exact figure, but it is close to $3million [£1.5m]. He was a player we were looking to be a big part of our future and there was no way we were going to let him go for free.

"We expected him to stay for two or three years and then leave as the big star he was going to be, but in the end it was his decision and there was nothing we could do about it. I hope he won't regret leaving the club at such an early age."

'I'd love to win promotion for the fans, it would be my legacy here'

However, the Gunners found it impossible to obtain a work permit for the youngster, so he was shipped out to Celta Vigo on a two-year loan. Vela did play with the Galician team during pre-season last summer but was deemed too young for the first team and was packed off again, this time to second division Salamanca.

The Celta coaching staff may well be regretting that decision. Vela has flourished since arriving in Castile, with his darting forward runs and amazing dribbling ability making him an instant hit at the Estadio Helmantico. Not only that but Vela is Salamanca's top scorer despite playing in an unusual left midfield position. Celta, meanwhile, had only a mediocre autumn campaign and would surely have benefited from having the teen sensation on board.

Vela loves his new surroundings but is aware that his future lies elsewhere. "I'd love to win promotion for the fans," he says. "That would be my legacy here as I don't know what will happen at the end of the season." The likely scenario is a return to Celta to complete his loan period then finally off to Arsenal full time.

The Gunners have monitored Vela's progress and chief scout Steve Rowley believes he has the quality to develop into a top-class player. "Carlos is a great talent," he says. "He's not a typical striker. He's a wonderful poacher. He's fast, a great dribbler and instinctive in the box."

Vela, who is learning English, hopes to be playing in the Premiership within two years. "I want to play there alongside Thierry Henry. It would be a dream," he says.

For now, though, his goal must be simply to carry on driving defences crazy as he tries to help steer Salamanca to what would be a dramatic return to the Spanish top flight.

Martin del Palacio Langer

Silverware at last... skipper Javi Navarro hoists the UEFA Cup after the crushing 4-0 defeat of Middlesbrough

Pacesetters

Sevilla's fast and furious attacking play has put them on track for a championship triumph. Sid Lowe reports

ASKED HOW IT felt to find himself in charge of Spain's third biggest club recently, Sevilla president Jose Maria Del Nido replied incredulously: "Third? We're the best club in the world, let alone Spain. Third? No, sir, we're No 1. Barcelona are second and Madrid...well, I can't even remember where Madrid are now."

The remark was typical of a man with a big ego and a habit of making grand statements. But the thing is, he was probably right. Sevilla are UEFA Cup and European Supercup holders and went into the Christmas break top of the Spanish League after a 4-0 thrashing of Deportivo La Coruna.

Sevilla are genuine contenders for the championship, though you won't catch anyone at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium saying so, not in public anyway. Within the club there is an unwillingness to admit that Sevilla can go all the way, perhaps for fear of jinxing their side – but they can.

The team took 37 points from their first 16 games to lead Barcelona, who had a game in hand, by three points. They won every home league game, their victims including Real Madrid, the top division's best travellers, and had been beaten just three times away – their 2-1 defeat at Atletico Madrid came only after having two

Local hero...Jesus Navas

Key men

Frederic Kanoute
The former Lyon, West Ham and Tottenham striker has thrived since joining Sevilla in 2005 and led the league scoring chart with 14 goals this Christmas. Kanoute, a Muslim, has blanked out the shirt logo of the club's internet betting firm sponsor this season since gambling is against the principles of Islam.

Jesus Navas
A local hero who has replaced Jose Antonio Reyes on the right wing and given a series of breathtaking displays over the past three seasons.

Daniel Alves
Flying Brazilian wing-back who joined from Bahia in 2002, initially on loan. A £10million bid from Liverpool was rejected last summer.

Back in Spain...Jose Antonio Reyes

Old boys

Julio Baptista
Brazilian signed as a defensive midfielder from Sao Paulo but converted to a striker and scored 50 goals in two seasons before being sold to Real Madrid in 2005 for £13m.

Sergio Ramos
Played for Sevilla for two seasons but was still a teenager when joining Real Madrid in 2005 after they agreed to pay the £18m buy-out clause in his contract.

Jose Antonio Reyes
Winger who made his Sevilla debut at 16 and was sold to Arsenal in January 2004 for £9m, rising to £11.5m. Now back in Spain with Real Madrid.

men sent off and conceding two very late goals, while they had a perfectly legitimate goal disallowed during the 3-1 defeat at Camp Nou and two of Barca's goals were dubious.

Nor is this form a flash in the pan. Until their UEFA Cup defeat by AZ Alkmaar on December 14, Sevilla had not lost a home match in any competition for almost a year. They finished fifth in the League last term but only two points behind runners-up Real Madrid (Sevilla missed out on the Champions League only because of an inferior head-to-head record with fourth-placed Osasuna), and hammered Spanish and European champions Barcelona 3-0 in the European Supercup in August. "It's frustrating not being in the Champions League because, quite honestly, Sevilla play better football than lots of teams who are in the competition," says coach Juande Ramos. "We had the same points as Osasuna, were one behind Valencia, and two behind Real Madrid. A weird set of circumstances went against us and I think, frankly, that Sevilla deserved to play in the Champions League. Had we done so, we would not have had any fears whatsoever."

Wait for silverware

The club's success has been a long time coming. The 4-0 UEFA Cup Final triumph over Middlesbrough in May brought them their first piece of silverware since 1948, when they won the Spanish Cup for the third time. Sevilla have won La Liga only once, in 1946.

The fact that they are now in the running for a second Spanish championship and have just won two pieces of silverware is not bad at all considering that they lost Julio Baptista and Sergio Ramos to Real Madrid in summer 2005: the former their best player, who had scored 50 goals in two seasons; the latter their youth team standard-bearer. Consider also that that summer they lost coach Joaquin Caparros, a lifelong Sevilla supporter popular with players and fans alike, to Deportivo. And that their budget for 2006 was £20million, against Real Madrid's £232m, Barcelona's £162m and Valencia's £89m.

But while Sevilla's success has been a long time coming, it has also been coming for a long time. On the pitch, the team have been on an upward curve. Since winning promotion in 2001, they have finished eighth, 10th, sixth, sixth and fifth. And they are a model of how to run a football club. Del Nido has, as promised, wiped out the £30m debt he inherited when becoming president in 2002, and the club made a £16m profit last season. There are 41,000 members and another 7,000 on the waiting list.

But it is in youth development and the transfer market that Sevilla have really made their money, and made an impact on the pitch, thanks to the extraordinary success of an impeccably-dressed former goalkeeper, Ramon Rodriguez Verdejo – or Monchi, as he is known.

Atmospheric...Sevilla's Sanchez Pizjuan stadium

The sporting director has helped restructure an already fruitful youth-team set-up and now oversees a unit that involves psychologists and teachers as well as 12 full-time coaches. That youth-team structure has provided more than 20 first-team debutants in less than a decade, including the wonderful talent of Jesus Navas and, of course, Jose Antonio Reyes.

The subsequent sale of some of those players brought a huge cash injection. Reyes pulled in £11.5m when joining Arsenal, Sergio Ramos £18m when leaving for Real Madrid. Overall, Sevilla have earned more than £50m from the sale of home-grown players since 1997, the departees also including Jose Mari, Carlitos, Juan Velasco, Carlos Marchena and Jesuli.

Of course, the income from such sales has allowed the club to be solvent, meaning they do not have to sell off all their assets – for instance, last summer they rejected a £10m offer from Liverpool for fabulous Brazilian attacking full-back Daniel Alves – and can plough some of the money into new signings – last summer, Javier Chevanton became the club's record buy at £4.7m, while current league top scorer Frederic Kanoute cost £4.3m in 2005.

But, in general, the budgetary constraints mean that cheap buys are the order of the day – and the success of this policy is in large part down to Sevilla's impressive scouting network. Monchi heads a team of seven international scouts covering 22 countries, from Argentina and Brazil to Iceland, Scotland and Ireland, and detailed reports on over 150 players are produced every four months. Brazil has provided particularly rich pickings, offering up players such as Daniel Alves (for just £0.5m), Adriano Correia (£1.4m) and Julio Baptista (£2m). When the latter turned up, no one else in Spain had heard of him. A half-century of goals later, he joined Real Madrid for £13m.

> **'With effort, speed, teamwork and ambition, our players can overcome teams who are better technically'** *Coach Juande Ramos*

Other top-value buys have included Enzo Maresca, the key man in the UEFA Cup Final, for £2m, Julien Escude for £1.2m, and Andres Palop, Christian Poulsen (the man with the best pass-completion stats in the League) and Javi Navarro for free. The key is hunger, Monchi insists. Sevilla's players come determined to make a name for themselves – and most of them do.

"All our players come from a lower level. No one has played for big clubs or won major trophies before," coach Ramos explains. "The fact that these humble players have seen that they have the chance to achieve something great has made them proud of working in this way, of defending this team. That symbiosis has made us take that great leap. Our players work with real conviction."

That conviction is evident in the recent run of success, though Sevilla's current high placing looked distinctly unlikely after Caparros departed. The coach had a difficult relationship with Del Nido but many thought the bubble would burst after he left. Some fans were dismayed when the president appointed Ramos, who had previously worked for city rivals Betis, and Del Nido even declared the team to be "shit" just after Ramos took charge. But in fact Sevilla soon showed they had made a leap in quality under the new man.

That should not have been a major surprise, since Ramos has a superb record. He made his name when steering Logrones into the top flight in 1996, then took Rayo Vallecano into the first division and the 2000-01 UEFA Cup, when they reached the quarter-finals. He also proved a success at Malaga, his last posting before Sevilla. Only at Espanyol, where problems with the board meant Ramos lasted just five weeks, had he failed to be successful.

After Malaga, whom he left in 2004, he took a sabbatical, during which he travelled the world watching football. Now, he is widely recognised as the best coach in Spain. Del Nido says: "If [Barcelona coach] Frank Rijkaard came here, he would have to manage the B team."

Ramos' training regime was so hard last summer that the players wore tape over their mouths as a silent protest. But no one is complaining now. "The coach has really driven home the need to win every game, to go out there and fight to the death," goalkeeper Palop says. "That attitude is vital."

Breathtaking speed

Driven by ambition, now truly believing that the system works, convinced by their coach, Sevilla are tough and uncompromising. Above all, though, they are fast. In fact, Sevilla play at breathtaking speed, swarming all over opponents, going all out for victory. The way they approached Middlesbrough in the UEFA Cup Final was no one-off; it was a stamp of identity.

Ramos and Monchi have consciously sought out players with both mental and physical speed, while the entire side have been given a boost by the efforts of endocrinologist Dr Antonio Escribano. His methods have prompted the squad to lose unwanted weight, some of them as much as eight kilos, and his vegetable and fruit smoothies, prepared with exactly the right amount of vitamins and minerals for each player, are an integral part of the team's half-time routine.

Up for it...Kanoute and Javi Navarro leave Real's Emerson standing

"I have to show the players that with effort, speed, teamwork and ambition, they can overcome players who are better than them technically," Ramos says. "Our game is based on winning the ball back quickly and using it quickly, attacking as fast as we can." Statistically, the side enjoy barely a third of the possession of Barcelona but assistant coach Antonio Alvarez insists: "Just because the other team have the ball for more minutes than us does not mean we are not dominating the game."

Sevilla's attack-minded approach makes them one of the best sides to watch in La Liga, and they are roared on by the Sanchez Pizjuan, a real football stadium with a magnificent atmosphere. Pace is augmented by precision and real width, the wingers hugging the touchline and always looking to take on their opponents.

With both full-backs joining the attack at every opportunity, Sevilla effectively play with two wingers on each side, and in Jesus Navas have a flank player of extraordinary pace and daring. Small wonder Sevilla deliver more balls into the box that lead to shots on goal than any other side in the division; small wonder that Kanoute has already hit more league goals this season – 14 – than in any other in his career.

Del Nido recently described title talk as a "utopia", an impossible dream. This time he was wrong. Sevilla's challenge is for real.

Squad

GOALKEEPERS

13	David COBENO	06.04.82
1	Andres PALOP	22.10.73

DEFENDERS

20	AITOR OCIO	28.11.76
4	DANIEL ALVES (Bra)	06.05.83
3	DAVID	29.01.74
19	Ivica DRAGUTINOVIC (Ser)	13.11.75
14	Julien ESCUDE (Fra)	17.08.79
24	Andreas HINKEL (Ger)	26.03.82
2	JAVI NAVARRO	06.02.74

MIDFIELDERS

6	ADRIANO Correia (Bra)	26.10.84
27	Alejandro ALFARO	23.11.86
26	BRUNO	13.02.85
5	DUDA (Por)	27.06.80
22	FERNANDO SALES	12.09.77
15	JESUS NAVAS	21.11.85
25	Enzo MARESCA (Ita)	10.02.80
18	Jose Luis MARTI	28.04.75
8	Christian POULSEN (Den)	28.02.80
16	Antonio PUERTA	26.11.84
11	RENATO (Bra)	15.05.79

FORWARDS

7	Javier CHEVANTON (Uru)	12.08.80
12	Frederic KANOUTE (Mli)	02.09.77
23	KEPA	13.01.84
10	LUIS FABIANO (Bra)	08.11.80

'No one else dares to play like we do'

Q&A Juande Ramos

You're UEFA Cup holders, thrashed Barcelona to win the European Supercup, are top of the Spanish League and playing brilliantly. How have you managed it?

We've had such self-confidence and conviction since the UEFA Cup Final that we have been able to achieve really excellent results. We beat Barcelona clearly and went on an excellent run in the League. The team has total confidence in our system; there's a real conviction about everything we do. The key is convincing the players to be very ambitious. Sometimes you can lose games, but you have to keep going with it, keep striving to achieve more.

Can that confidence be broken by a couple of bad results?

I don't think so. We've had a few bad results and come back from them. I try to make the players see that you can win or lose, but that there's a path you have to stick to. You can lose the match, but you can't lose your identity.

Sevilla's success has been coming for a long time, hasn't it? This is a club that does things the right way at almost all levels. The youth system is productive, the signings policy has been successful…

You won't find us doing here what they do at other clubs, when after one bad season they dump 10 players and get 10 new ones or change the whole structure. Each season we perfect little things, we don't need a huge overhaul every summer. Last season, we got knocked out of the Spanish Cup but carried on in the same manner because we thought we were doing things right. We wouldn't have succeeded if we had thrown away all that good work.

Sevilla have been very successful in the transfer market.

There are players we can't afford so we have to look for cheaper players who still give us good results. You're never going to get it 100 per cent right but there are ways of maximising your chances: you don't just look at the player on the pitch but everything about him. You can think someone's a good player and then discover that his private life is a mess. So, you watch him play and train, you speak to those close to him.

Is it easier to work without stars, with players who have won nothing?

The player who is not a star may be hungrier but the star guarantees you a certain number of victories because he can win games on his own. Sevilla don't have any stars but we win the games on the basis of humility and a level of physical exertion that is very, very high. Teams with stars make far less effort but can win the game with one moment.

How does your relationship with sporting director Monchi work? What roles do you have when it comes to choosing players?

There's a clear consensus. I tell Monchi the player or type of player I want: fast, tall, left-footed, right-footed, good in the air…and, based on his work and expertise, he says to me: "Look, we have this guy, or this guy." Between us, we identify the player, or players, who can fit that. But it's not always like that. For example, Freddie Kanoute was a player no one here really knew and I recommended him because I had seen him for Tottenham and West Ham.

Would you like the model to be more like in England, with you controlling the signings? In Spain, at other clubs, the sporting director-coach model has caused lots of problems.

The thing is, the coach doesn't really have time to do both jobs. What you need is trust and professionalism.

Sevilla's success has been coming for some time but it is also true that the team have made a leap since you replaced Joaquin Caparros. What is the biggest difference between your model and his?

There's no comparison, really. Caparros did a very good job at Sevilla but he's totally defensive in his outlook. His side played more conservatively and tried to score on the break. My Sevilla look to attack from the start of every game. That's my style – and it's working. But Caparros got results his way, too.

Sevilla are one of the few teams to still play with out-and-out wingers. Does it sadden you that wingers are so thin on the ground these days?

As a spectator, I'm sure it saddens you. But as a coach, no: I'm proud to be the only one that does so. It gives my team identity, it gives me identity as a coach. You look at other teams and think, bloody hell, no one else dares to play like we do – and it works for us.

Why don't others dare?

Because it's risky. You leave yourself open. But that's what I mean about having real conviction. You have to be sure that in a match where you willingly trade punches, you're going to come out on top. You need your players to believe or else they will fear for the result and stop taking the risks that make you a good team.

There's lots of excitement about Jesus Navas. Is he as good as they say?

He's a lad who is playing very, very well. He is extremely fast and is a very, very talented player. Our style suits his characteristics perfectly, and the team work hard for him.

Navas has been suffering anxiety attacks recently. How do you handle a situation like that?

Above all, you give him all the understanding you can, you try to make him feel at ease. We look after him, care for him, make him feel as good as possible.

Kanoute seems to be a man transformed.

He's the perfect example of what we have done here. In England he was an excellent player who never quite fulfilled his potential. Here, he has been extraordinary, based on convincing him that he is good enough, making him feel assured, giving him confidence.

And giving him wingers.

Yes, because of his size and positioning he can finish extremely well if he is given the service.

'Kanoute is the perfect example of what we've done – he's been extraordinary'

Does your identity as a team change according to the opponents? For example, how did you approach the UEFA Cup Final against Middlesbrough?

At no point did I talk to the players about the fact we were going to play a final. Everywhere they went, they were reminded of it – by the fans, by the man in the street, by the media, by their friends – so I tried to lighten that burden. I didn't want them to feel even more laden with responsibility. That week was the week we trained the least and enjoyed ourselves the most. We didn't even talk about our opponents. If I had piled on the pressure even more, they would have gone on to the pitch terrified. Instead, they were relaxed and confident, and the result was spectacular.

And tactically? The result was so overwhelming, it was as if you were just on a different level.

There was a moment in the game when Middlesbrough looked at Sevilla and saw that there was no way they were going to get the better of us. They saw a team in front of them that knew they were going to win. Footballers are sensitive to that and I think they started to think: "This team are a rock that we just can't move." I was watching them and there was a moment about 15 or 20 minutes into the second half when their shoulders dropped and they gave up. Then we killed them, because we were flying.

You knew there would be more goals?

Oh yes. Although we were 1-0 up, at no time did we sit back. We kept going forward with the same ambition, the same attitude, the same determination to attack. They must have been thinking: "What's going on here? This lot are winning 1-0 and they just keep coming at us." Finals are not like that normally. The team who score first usually sit back the longer the game goes on without them scoring again. They start defending and wasting time. Our mentality was totally different, and I think Middlesbrough were surprised by that.

Would it have been different if it hadn't been Middlesbrough, a mid-table team? If it had been Real Madrid, would Sevilla have been more cautious?

I would like to think not. We kept on attacking in the European Supercup against Barcelona. We beat them 3-0 but no one would have been surprised if it had been five or six. With us, it's all-out, 90 minutes, and you have to kill yourself.

Is winning the League a real possibility this season?

Our objective is getting into the Champions League. Then, we'll see.

It seems like no one wants to come out and say: "Yes, we can win it."

Because with Madrid and Barcelona there, you can't say that.

But you're better than them!

Maybe, but you can't say that. We're not going to say that we don't want to win the League, but we can't say we'll win it when those two clubs are far ahead of us in terms of budget and squad. If we find that the League is within reach, of course we're going to go for it, but we can't make it an obligation. We're not at that level.

If you do win it, everyone will talk about Sevilla – and about you. What's your situation?

I'm a professional who's open to any job offer from anywhere in the world. I don't have any problem coaching anywhere.

There was interest from Tottenham, wasn't there?

I heard about it through my agents but there was no direct contact.

Would you consider working in England?

Yes, I really like the Premiership. English football is very attractive, and I certainly wouldn't rule it out. Football in England is fast, direct, attacking, aggressive – I like that. Also, Rafa Benitez has shown that Spaniards can coach there. There are some similarities between me and him – in fact, we have almost had parallel careers.

Juande Ramos – the CV

FULL NAME: Juan de la Cruz Ramos Cano
BORN: 25.09.54
COACHING CAREER:

1993-94	Alcoyano
1994-95	Levante
1995-96	Logrones
1996-97	Barcelona B
1997-98	Lleida
1998-01	Rayo Vallecano
2001-02	Betis
2002	Espanyol
2003-04	Malaga
2005-	Sevilla

Full stretch…Kanoute slides in alongside team-mate Luis Fabiano to meet a cross in a 2-1 win over Real Madrid

SIX of the best

Surprise packages

1 Diego

BRAZILIAN PLAYMAKER Diego endured two unhappy seasons at FC Porto but since joining Werder Bremen has refound the dazzling form of his early years at Santos.

It is clear now that Werder general manager Klaus Allofs pulled off one of the best deals of last summer. In return for an eminently reasonable fee of £4.2million, he picked up one of the most brilliant attacking midfielders in the world, a player of uncommon dribbling ability, creativity and goalscoring threat.

There had to be an element of risk in transplanting the diminutive Diego and his impudent ball skills into such a physically hard-hitting championship as the Bundesliga. But the gamble has paid off, with Werder surging to the top of the table thanks in no small part to the Brazilian's contribution, which has included eight goals and 10 assists.

The compliments have flowed all season long for the 21-year-old. "He, alone, is the difference between Bremen and Bayern," insists Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer. Ex-Dortmund and Bayern boss Ottmar Hitzfeld is also a fan, saying: "Right now, Diego is far and away the most impressive player in the country, a real No 10 who takes his team to another level of effectiveness."

So how has Diego gone from also-ran to barnstormer? No doubt because of Werder's adventurous footballing philosophy. The flair and individualism construed as liabilities by Porto coach Co Adriaanse are qualities warmly embraced at Bremen. "I was a victim of tactics in Portugal," claims the reborn youngster.

2 Rolando Bianchi

FEW IN ITALY would have predicted last summer that 23-year-old Reggina striker Rolando Bianchi would emerge as one of the high-fliers in the Serie A scoring chart. He had proved his worth in Italy's Under-21 side, but had rarely caught the eye at club level since making his top-flight debut for Atalanta against Juventus in 2001.

Bianchi struggled to make the transition from junior star to first-team mainstay in Bergamo, became typecast as a reserve in a brief spell at Cagliari, and shortly after moving to Reggina last season he damaged cruciate knee ligaments and missed almost the entire campaign.

But his luck has taken a real turn for the better so far this term. He hit a hat-trick in a 4-3 loss to Palermo on the first weekend and has kept up the good work, showing intelligence and intensity, a genuine poacher's instincts and a major aerial threat.

Reggina are carrying a 15-point handicap for match-fixing and initially seemed certainties for relegation. Bianchi obviously has other ideas.

3 Raffael

IN RECENT TIMES, Brazilian strikers Sonny Anderson and Giovane Elber have both used Swiss clubs as the launchpad to fame and fortune. Zurich's outstanding front-man Raffael Caetano de Araujo could soon follow their example. The 21-year-old former Vitoria Bahia and Juventus of Sao Paulo player has been irrepressible this term, rattling in nine goals before the winter break and making nine others.

Opponents simply cannot live with the diminutive forward's cheeky dribbling, flair for the killer pass and turbo-charged acceleration. Mention his name in Zurich and the response is always the same: "*Weltklasse*."

To think that the club paid only £200,000 to prise him away from lower league Swiss side Chiasso in summer 2005. It will take a far larger sum to secure his services now, though there are sure to be plenty of takers, among them Sporting Lisbon, where Raffael's younger brother Ronny is a full-back.

4 Alexis

THEY KNOW A thing or two about producing fine central defenders in Malaga. The Andalucian city produced all-time Spanish great Fernando Hierro, and youngster Alexis Ruano Delgado, who played for his hometown club before joining Getafe last summer, appears to have been cast from the same mould.

Getafe had the best defensive record in the top flight after 17 rounds this season, having conceded only 12 goals, in no small part thanks to Alexis' robustness, strength in the air, tenacity and keen sense of anticipation. The 21-year-old is more than useful at the other end of the pitch, too, heading home the winner in his side's shock victory against Real Madrid in October.

Alexis' outstanding form means his stay at Getafe is unlikely to be a long one, with Milan, Barcelona, Valencia and his Real Madrid victims all in the running to snap him up.

5 Karim Benzema

MANY YOUNG players would be overawed by the prospect of competing for a starting berth in the Lyon attack, with competition of the calibre of Sidney Govou, Fred, John Carew and Sylvain Wiltord. But not local-boy-come-good Karim Benzema, whose fine performances this season have put him up among the contenders at the French champions.

The 19-year-old, who is equally comfortable as a spearhead or on either flank, has been terrorising defences with his pace, technical proficiency and fearlessness. He has also proved imperturbable when it comes to converting chances – a good example was a brilliantly taken goal in the 4-1 demolition of Marseille at the Stade Velodrome in October.

Benzema richly deserved his first call-up to the senior France squad – for the November friendly with Greece – but an ill-timed hamstring injury means his baptism has yet to come.

6 Nwankwo Kanu

ANYONE WATCHING Nwankwo Kanu over the past few years will probably have concluded that he did not have much gas left in the tank. The lanky Nigerian forward has not got into double figures at club level in league football since scoring 12 goals for Arsenal in the 1999-2000 campaign. In the past two seasons at struggling West Bromwich Albion he was very much off the pace, turning the embarrassing miss into an art form.

However, the obituary writers were a little premature. After moving on a free transfer to Portsmouth in the close season, the 30-year-old has not stopped scoring, some of the goals even from headers, a technique to which he had previously always shown an aversion. So it seems you can teach an old dog new tricks after all.

Profiles by Nick Bidwell

SAVE 15% ON THE FULL ANNUAL PRICE, PLUS...

SEND THIS COUPON TO:

UK World Soccer Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1061, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3BR

OVERSEAS & USA World Soccer Subscriptions, PO Box 272, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, UK, RH16 3FS (please attach correct postage)

I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE

- ☐ UK 6 monthly Direct Debit £18.20 (save 15%)
- ☐ UK 1 year £38.60 (save 10%)
- ☐ UK 2 years £72.90 (save 15%)
- ☐ USA 1 year $88.24 (save 25%)
- ☐ USA 2 years $164.72 (save 30%)
- ☐ Europe 1 year €64.39 (save 25%)
- ☐ Europe 2 years €120.20 (save 30%)
- ☐ Rest of World 1 year £55.65 (save 25%)
- ☐ Rest of World 2 years £103.88 (save 30%)

PLUS RECEIVE MY FREE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL BOOK WORTH £29

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode/Zip code:

Country/State

Home tel. no. (inc. country/area code):

If you would like to receive emails from World Soccer and IPC containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

If you would like to receive text messages from World Soccer and IPC containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your mobile number below.

Mobile:

Date of birth: D D M M Y Y Y Y

PAYMENT DETAILS

I enclose cheque/international money order for £/€/$_____ made payable to IPC Media Ltd.

Or please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Switch/Maestro (UK only)

Switch only

Expiry date: / / / Switch Card issue no / Start date

Signature: (I am over 18)

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

DIRECT Debit

Originator's reference 764 221

Account no:

Account Name:

Name of Bank:

Address:

Postcode:

Account no: Sort code:

Signature: Date:

(I am over 18)

This offer is only open to new subscribers. Gift only available to new UK subscribers. The £18.20 offer is only available by Direct Debit for UK subscribers. The closing date for this offer is 28th February 2007. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue, eight weeks for overseas. Your free gift will be delivered separately within 28 days after your first payment has been taken and is subject to availability. **For enquiries and overseas rates please call +44 (0)845 676 7778, fax +44 (0)845 675 9101, or email: ipcsubs@pss-uk.com.** World Soccer, published by IPC Media Ltd (IPC), will collect your personal information to process your order. World Soccer and IPC would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from us. ☐ IPC may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted. ☐ IPC who publish World Soccer would like to send messages to your mobile with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive messages please tick here ☐.

51W

Dear Reader,

World Soccer is the UK's oldest and most respected football magazine.

As a subscriber, you'll be joining a group of football insiders that includes leading TV commentators, football writers, managers, scouts and administrators. They all recognise the importance of being the first people to receive World Soccer every month, guaranteed. In addition, receive our special editions at no extra cost.

If you subscribe this month, you'll **also** receive a free copy of the 2007 edition of the European Book of Football, the indispensable reference guide to last season in Europe. Weighing in at more than 1,000 pages, the book is a fantastic accompaniment to a World Soccer subscription.

Gavin Hamilton,
Editor, World Soccer

The Direct Debit Guarantee: This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society. If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, IPC Media Ltd. will notify you at least ten days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If an error is made by IPC Media Ltd. or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid. You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of the letter to us. Direct Debits can ONLY be paid through a Bank or Building Society. Your Direct Debit price will stay the same for one year from start date.

Live outside the UK?

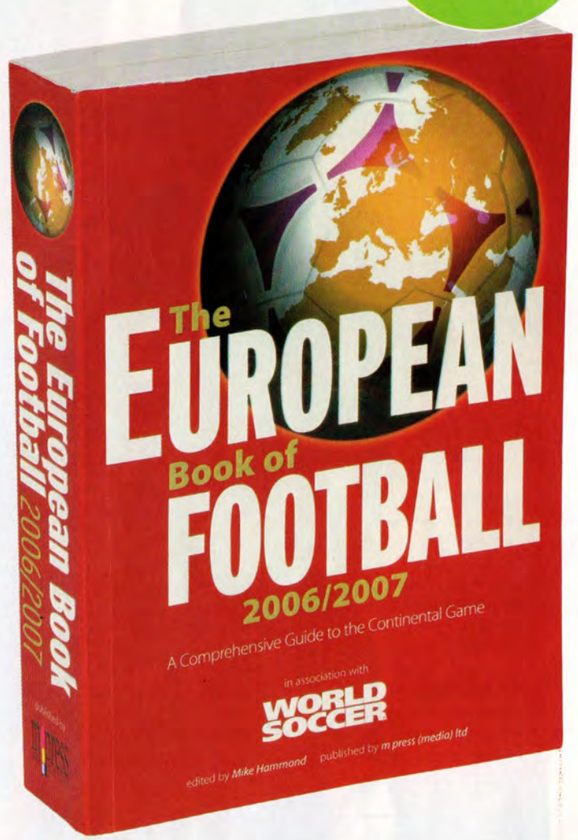
Visit **www.worldsoccersubs.com/iwsdq** for exclusive subscription rates **or call +44 (0)845 676 7778** quoting **51Z**

FREE

WORTH £29

EUROPEAN BOOK OF FOOTBALL FOR EVERY NEW SUBSCRIBER

HURRY! Offer closes 28 Feb 2007



Order online

www.worldsoccersubs.com/iwsdm

OFFER MAY VARY ONLINE

Order hotline

+44(0)845 676 7778

LINES OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK, 9am-9pm UK Time.
QUOTE CODE 51W

Holloway offside in the blame game

None the wiser...Plymouth manager Holloway hit out after his side had a goal ruled out for offside

PLYMOUTH MANAGER Ian Holloway blamed the wrong party during his recent outburst about the offside law. And the truth is that whatever changes or reversions that the International Board (not FIFA!) makes to the rules, offside will always be a contentious issue.

The situation arose following two controversial decisions by referee Kevin Wright during Plymouth's 1-1 draw at home to Southampton on New Year's Day. The hosts were denied what would have been a winning goal when scorer David Norris was ruled offside, but Grzegorz Rasiak's earlier goal for the Saints, which stood, might similarly have been disallowed.

Holloway said: "Their goal was unfair because Rasiak was offside for the first pass [in the move that led up to the goal]. If they are going to allow that goal they should have allowed ours. How can they judge between first and second-phase offside?

"I blame the rules. If you are offside, whether it is first or second phase, you are offside. Sepp Blatter is an idiot. He is a complete lunatic. He should put those rules back to where they should be. I think we have been robbed...I feel sorry for the refs – it's not their fault."

Ten days later the Football Association's disciplinary mechanism creaked into action and Holloway was asked to explain his remarks about Blatter. The true explanation is simple: it was in the heat of the moment after Plymouth had been denied a first win in five games, and Holloway – who wears his footballing heart on his sleeve – was understandably upset.

Yet his outburst illustrates the ongoing problems that beset managers and players in understanding the laws of the game. Ignore the cloudy degrees of first

'The basic fact is the laws of the game are not administered by Blatter but by the International Board'

Wrong target...Sepp Blatter

and second-phase offside: the basic fact is that the laws of the game are administered not by Blatter but by the International Board, which meets annually in spring and is made up of four representatives from FIFA and one representative from each of the four British home nations.

FIFA then issues little blue booklets in which the laws of the game are set out along with the various interpretations.

Offside will always be contentious, whatever the interpretation, because ultimately the decision depends on the vision/opinion of the referee and his assistant. Television cannot always help, either. Some of the most awkward decisions concern a lone striker chasing a through ball – and cameras are rarely pulled back far enough to take in more than one half of a pitch.

We can watch the pass being lofted forward or we can watch the striker sprint onwards – but hardly ever the two together.

These are grey areas similar to the "did-he-dive-or-was-he-pushed?" debate. Problems of interpretation pour in when both events occur: a forward is jostled illegally (i.e. not shoulder to shoulder) and accentuates the challenge by going readily to ground.

Some players go more easily than others. But that has always been the case. Critics of, say, Cristiano Ronaldo may not remember Cliff Jones, but the Wales winger who starred in Tottenham's Double-winning side of 1961 had such terrific pace that, in full flight, it took the barest hint of a defender's boot to catapult him through the air. Of course, Jones usually won the free-kick.

Blame the referee? Blame the defender? Of course, if Jones had been playing today it would have been easy: we could have blamed Sepp Blatter...

Poor return on Sheva

Troubled times...Andrii Shevchenko

THE ENORMOUS EXPENDITURE on players by Chelsea above all but also Real Madrid, Milan, Barcelona and Internazionale – among others – creates enormous headlines and fills hours of broadcasting time. But there is another side to the excitement generated when a new superstar comes to town: what happens when it does not work out? This is the doomsday scenario facing Chelsea with Andrii Shevchenko.

No one can dispute the Ukrainian's track record of goals for Kyiv Dynamo, Milan and his national team. That was what persuaded Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich to make Shevchenko, at £30million, the most expensive signing in British history and among the highest-paid players in the Premiership.

Yet what has been the return on the investment? As I write, a paltry six goals in 29 games, leading to his long-delayed but inevitable relegation to the bench. That has been an ignominious fate for a former European Footballer of the Year.

Sheva, to be fair, has taken it all in his stride. He has not complained to manager Jose Mourinho or to the media – a traditional way for English players to let off steam – and his behaviour with the fans has been impeccable. He does not hide from them and signs autographs with a polite grace that puts most of his club-mates to shame. Yet Shevchenko was not signed at such high cost to sign autographs.

True, settling into the Premiership is not easy. The English game is played at a much faster pace than in most other countries. Managers demand a high workrate, even from strikers, who are asked to track back to mark advancing defenders.

Didier Drogba, Shevchenko's club-mate and currently the finest player in the Premiership as well as the most dangerous goalscorer, knows the truth of the matter; so does Hernan Crespo, the Argentinian striker who had two spells at Stamford Bridge before returning to the more cerebral and less frenetic world of Italian football.

Drogba says: "Everyone knows I had problems in my first season. It was a different style of football and a different lifestyle off the pitch. The rhythm of the match schedule is different, and then there is coping with a new language."

Crespo says: "The Premier League is a great competition in which any team can beat any other team, even the top teams, on the right day. That makes it both physically and mentally demanding, and there is very little time between matches to work on individual aspects of your game. Then, if you are not in form, your confidence starts to go very quickly."

The history of football is littered with superstars who failed the transfer test, particularly within the World Cup sphere, from Didi to Jimmy Greaves.

Shevchenko says: "I went into the World Cup with an injury that was not properly healed so I really needed much more time to recover before I came back to football – but the pressure of matches nowadays means such time does not exist.

"I know the fans are disappointed with what I have achieved so far but they are not as disappointed as I am. My consolation is that this is a long season, there are a lot of games, and I am confident that everything will work out for me in the long term."

The problem is that Mourinho, like any manager, is looking at short-term targets. This season, that means not only winning the Premiership title for a third successive time but also, and more important for Abramovich, the Champions League.

If Mourinho fails to lead Chelsea to triumph in Europe at his third attempt, he will probably be looking for a new club, never mind Shevchenko. Abramovich and his ilk may have a lot of money but they have very little patience.

To play's the thing

Nostalgic...Aime Jacquet

AIME JACQUET, who guided France to glory in the 1998 World Cup, has just retired as France's national technical director. But he would happily trade in all his success and high office off the pitch for the chance to go back to the 1970s and be a player once again with the all-conquering Saint-Etienne side.

As Jacquet told Zinedine Zidane and co on the brink of World Cup triumph: "You are lucky enough to have the greatest job in the world and you should make the most of it."

Of course, Jacquet might have recommended a more fitting exit for Zizou.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

...THE HEADLINE-MAKERS OFF THE PITCH

Sepp Blatter

● SEPP BLATTER...
The FIFA president has apologised to the Italian federation for not presenting the World Cup in person to the *Azzurri* after the Final in Berlin. Blatter said: "History will say it was an error. I apologised to Italy's political and sporting authorities immediately afterwards." The president said he had not appeared because the crowd at the opening match had booed every mention of FIFA's name and he had wanted to avoid a repeat at the Final. Utter chaos took over the presentation podium before Lennart Johansson, president of FIFA's World Cup organising committee, shouldered his way between the Italian players to hand the trophy to skipper Fabio Cannavaro.

● GRAEME SOUNESS...
The former Rangers and Newcastle manager has tabled a £20million offer to buy Wolverhampton Wanderers. Chief executive Jez Moxley denied receiving such an offer, though it is no secret that owner Sir Jack Hayward has been awaiting one for some time. Souness may well be back.

● MICHEL PLATINI...
The Frenchman has been claiming increasing support from eastern Europe and the continent's minnow nations on the last lap of his UEFA presidency challenge to Lennart Johansson. Meanwhile, the Swede has continued to claim heavyweight support from western Europe. German federation president Theo Zwanziger publicly backed Johansson's "continuity" manifesto. The vote is on January 26.

Graeme Souness

Michel Platini

● LAMAR HUNT...
United States soccer lost one of its most loyal long-term supporters when Lamar Hunt died, aged 74. He was a pioneer of the gridiron NFL and an enthusiastic supporter of open tennis before revealing his soccer credentials as one of the original investors in the North American Soccer League in the early 1970s. Hunt stuck with US soccer's professional dream after the NASL's demise and supported the launch of Major League Soccer in the mid-1990s. He owned Columbus Crew, FC Dallas and, until recently, Kansas City Wizards. He also financed the construction of the Columbus Crew stadium.

Michael Cunnah

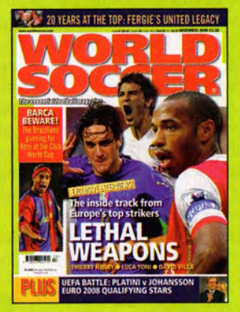
Lamar Hunt

● MICHAEL CUNNAH...
has left his post as chief executive of Wembley National Stadium Limited in sight of the promised land – the arena's completion. He had moved across to Wembley from the Football Association four years ago because he was the only man who understood – and was thus fit to unravel – the financial complexities of the project. In recent months, he was subject to a lot of criticism over delays, which was unfair since they were not his fault. But it was also clear that a different, events-pursuing and promoting chief executive would be needed once delivery of the stadium was within sight.

● LARS-CHRISTER OLSSON...
In a New Year message, the UEFA chief executive implored the football family to resolve problems within the game's structure rather than by resorting to the courts. He also said: "We should have...a proper distribution of resources from the top professional game to the grassroots so we can concentrate on developing football rather than talking about money and other administrative matters."

Keir Radnedge

Missed a copy of the world's most widely read football magazine?
If so, we have back issues available to buy



To purchase a back issue, please phone June Hiscock on +44 (0) 20 7261 5714
or e-mail her at june_hiscock@ipcmedia.com to receive price and payment details

WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

For globalisation read greed

Solo effort...Flamengo's Renato celebrates his club's progress to last year's Brazilian Cup Final in front of row after row of empty seats at the Maracana stadium

'The departure of teenagers who may have had only one season with a club now raises few eyebrows'

Lad's talk...Sergio Aguero joined Atletico Madrid at just 18

European clubs' mindless plundering of young South American talent is creating a crisis in the domestic game in Argentina and Brazil

IT SAYS GLOBAL VIEW at the top of this column, so naturally I feel I know a thing or two about this matter of globalisation. And I've been hearing and reading a good deal about it lately. The globalisation of football would appear to be an idea whose time has arrived. I've been nodding my head and agreeing that this is a great idea and that it represents progress.

You know the sort of stuff I mean – heartwarming images of a fractious world being brought together by football, no more wars, save the children, protect the animals and down with global warming.

But I've moved on, and now I'm not so sure. In all those warming sentiments there is an underlying theme of equality, a belief that we all should get a fair shake. But in most of these globalisation matters, it obviously doesn't work out that way.

Those who shout loudest about the benefits of globalisation tend to be economists. It's money we're talking about, and what happens – surprise, surprise – is that the rich come off rather well, while the have-nots get shafted. Soccer's globalisation is part of the massive trend towards the commercial internationalisation of the world.

To many, that trend means the increasing Americanisation of the world, its takeover by American big business. In football, the trend means Europeanisation, the takeover of the sport by rich European clubs.

In true globalisation there would be, as now, plenty of South American stars playing in Europe, but there would also be Europeans playing in South America. Obviously, that is not happening. Market forces are driving football's globalisation, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is at work, and the result is that all the world's best players are ending up in Europe.

That much is indisputable. What is much less clear is what long-term effect this will have. Smith is not much help here, we need to go back a good deal further, to the sixth century BC in fact, back to Aesop and his fable about the goose that laid golden eggs.

'An astonishing 804 Brazilians were sold to European clubs in 2005'

The goose is South America, particularly Brazil and Argentina (though it can equally well be Africa). The golden eggs are the star players. In the fable, it was not the purchasers of the eggs who killed the goose, but the farmer who owned it. He wanted more eggs, and immediately, so he killed off the goose and ripped it open – and found nothing. The real culprit, in the end, was simple greed.

What I'm looking at is this: what is the greed of the European clubs doing to the domestic game in Argentina and Brazil?

The Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* has recently analysed the situation, inevitably looking at it from the financial point of view. It said South American clubs are forced to sell their stars because of a crisis caused by bad management and stay-away fans.

Poor crowds mean less income, which means the exit of stars, which means poorer quality teams, which means a drop in attendance, and so on – a depressing cycle that offers no prospect of being broken.

At risk here is the South American game in general, and therefore football itself. If the aim of every young Brazilian or Argentinian is to play in Europe, then market forces will facilitate things. Agents are now ubiquitous on the South American scene, and they too get their major profits from sales to Europe.

Tidal-wave proportions

That's not exactly new, for South Americans have been moving to Italy and Spain since the 1930s. What is new is that the flow has now reached tidal-wave proportions. According to *O Globo*, 804 Brazilians were sold to Europe in 2005. The number is astonishing. When *World Soccer* published the Premier League squad lists for this season, there were 521 players in all. Brazil alone has exported enough players to populate one and a half leagues. Add in Argentina and the other South American countries, and the number of exports climbs to over 1,000.

But it is not only the numbers that are alarming. European clubs are looking at ever younger players. Where it was once only mature players who were signed, it is now common practice for teenagers to be recruited.

FIFA has attempted to limit this process, but its move to ban the international transfer of players under the age of 18 is aimed at preventing child abuse, not at preserving Latin soccer. Anyway, as the case of Carlos Vela shows, the FIFA regulation seems to be without teeth (see page 29).

Back in 1999, when news got out that River Plate were about to sell their two starlets, Pablo Aimar (aged 20) and Javier Saviola (17), fans organised protests at games and, possibly as a result of that anger, the players' exit was delayed until 2001. That was only a few years ago, but protests would be unlikely these days. The departure of teenagers who are promising but may only have had one season with a club now raises few eyebrows. Diego, recently voted the best player in the Bundesliga, left Brazil for Portugal at 19; Argentinian Sergio Aguero signed for Atletico Madrid last summer at 18; Real Madrid have just signed another Argentinian, 17-year-old Gonzalo Higuain, who played only 33 games for River Plate.

More than globalisation or Europeanisation, this is strip-mining. A mindless harvesting of resources, with no thought of anything other than immediate profit. It raises worrying questions about the future of Brazilian and Argentinian soccer. After all, why should Argentinian and Brazilian fans continue to go to games when all their best players are constantly snatched away from them by clubs half a world away, often to become citizens of another country, never to be seen again except on television? The crisis engendered by that thought is already upon us: there is no other word to describe the average attendance figures over the past 10 years, published by *O Globo*: Brazil, 12,000; Argentina, 10,600.

One reason why Europeans are ransacking South America and Africa is because they have largely failed to find a reliable way to produce top players of their own, despite all their money and their academies and their highly trained coaches. Correcting that failure might be a way to begin countering this greed dressed up as globalisation, and to start repairing the damage that the player-drain is wreaking in South American soccer.

WS WORLD SOCCER HOME FRONT David Conn

Profit and loss

More and more of England's top clubs are being treated as mere investment vehicles, a development that puts football even further from its roots and the fans

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, the English Premier League has been a history-free zone. Football, it would have you believe, was born on Sky TV in 1992. The Premiership does not even like being reminded about the circumstances of its own birth, a breakaway by the then First Division clubs from the Football League's other three divisions to avoid sharing the big money that was about to pour in from satellite TV.

Yet as the Premiership powers on through the next phase of its history – the takeovers of its clubs by mega-rich investors, usually from overseas – the amnesia about the 104 Football League years before the breakaway has suddenly started to clear, though only selectively, of course. For example, look at the proposed takeover of Liverpool by Dubai International Capital, the investment vehicle for Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. We are being asked to accept that English football was always this way, that John Moores, the founder of Littlewoods Pools, was doing no different when he bought Everton in the 1960s and also backed Liverpool financially, the latter development providing a base for the Bill Shankly-inspired renaissance.

Then there was Premier League spokesman Dan Johnson impishly arguing that November's takeover of West Ham by Icelandic investors Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson and Eggert Magnusson was essentially the same as the backing of Aston Villa in the 1880s by William McGregor, the founding father of the Football League. McGregor, Johnson argued, gave Villa players jobs in his drapery business, which shows that businessmen always financially supported clubs.

Global game

These fables are meant to soothe by suggesting that the difference now is only one of scale. The game has gone global, so we ought to be proud that Russian oligarchs, Icelandic brewing and banking billionaires and sundry foreign speculators want to invest their money in English clubs. We are told this is in line with the way the game has always been organised, it brings money in, and somehow – magically, it seems – the cherished culture of the clubs will be preserved.

In fact, the recent takeovers are potentially dangerous for the future of the game. They take English football further from its roots, its fans and from a true sense of being embedded in its communities. Any chance of reform, a return to more even sharing of the game's money, a reduction in the eyewatering ticket prices – the highest in Europe – which have excluded a generation of fans from the grounds, is now as remote as the men now buying the clubs.

Football was not always run in the way it is now. Yes, top English clubs have been businesses, limited companies, since as far back as the 1880s and 1890s, when they first became professional, had wage bills to pay and grounds to build to accommodate the crowds drawn to one of late Victorian Britain's greatest public entertainments. From the beginning, though, football support was not like going to the cinema; the customers were supporters, who loved the clubs, pledged loyalty and supported them passionately all their lives.

Rich men, speculators, were attracted to this business very early, too, and took ownership by buying a majority of the shares or became domineering chairmen, which was a departure from the clubs' collective founding spirit. Some of the reasons for the takeovers were indeed similar to those of today: clubs had over-reached themselves and got into debt, like West Ham now; or, like Liverpool, funds had to be raised to build a new stadium. The chairmen liked to say they were custodians of the clubs, wanting only to do their best for the supporters, but some were certainly attracted by the cash ringing through turnstiles and by the captive market of fans to whom beer and food could be sold.

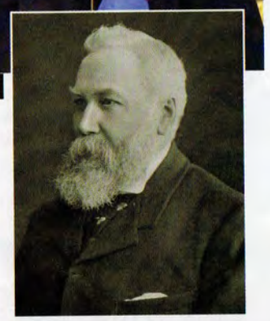
No doubt some chairmen, or owners, did find ways to steer a little cash into their own pockets. But the fact is that, like Moores, McGregor and almost all of the others, their primary motive was not financial; they were not in it to make money. Many put their own money into clubs, which were often loss-making, so it cost them to be directors. Importantly, too, the FA was very firm that clubs should remain clubs in their ethos, despite being limited companies in legal terms, and it imposed restrictions to ensure this. Latterly, Rule 34 in the FA handbook limited dividend payments to shareholders and salaries to directors, and prevented asset-stripping, to help ensure club directors and owners served the clubs rather than make money out of them.

Those restrictions were first bypassed by clubs forming holding companies to float on the stock market in the 1980s and 1990s. The rules were then scrapped, in a pathetic surrender by the FA under its then head of regulation, Nic Coward, in 1998 – just when more sophisticated rules were needed, in the new, commercialised era.

There is, therefore, a difference between McGregor and his drapery business, near Villa's ground in Aston, and American Randy Lerner, the multi-millionaire former chairman of the MBNA credit card company, who will fly in from New York to take in the odd Villa game and is said by his deal-broker, Keith Harris, to "see Villa as a long-term project, five, seven or even 10 years".

Mersey beat...Sheikh Mohammed is eyeing a takeover of Liverpool

New era...West Ham's owners Magnusson and Gudmundsson are a different breed from former Villa chairman McGregor (right)



'Before 1992, chairmen had mixed motives for holding the role, but few saw their club as an investment vehicle. For many, becoming the chairman was an ambition in itself'

Business opportunity

With the probable exception of Roman Abramovich, who has impenetrable motives for his ownership of Chelsea, all the new investors are motivated by making money out of English football. After Magnusson had talked endlessly about West Ham's history and heritage, Gudmundsson's spokesman told me plainly that his boss saw the club as a "business opportunity". The Glazers, Manchester United's American owners, have ladled £660million debt on to the club to finance their own speculation. Dubai International Capital is a private equity investment fund and by definition is looking for a financial gain from owning Liverpool. The two parties circulating Newcastle in December were both pure investment houses.

Before 1992, chairmen had mixed motives for holding the role, but few saw their club as an investment vehicle. The Edwards family, at Manchester United, were probably the first to do so, but Louis, Martin's father, originally bought shares because he was a rich fan of the club, thirsty for the proximity to players and reflected glory that came with being on the board. For many, becoming the chairman of the local club was not a means to an end, but an ambition in itself, a position of great prominence in the local community.

Perhaps that was why fans were never overcharged for tickets, and why grounds were left so sadly neglected. The clubs, although companies technically, still saw themselves as clubs, amateurish organisations. English football evolved as a rough, raw, people's game, the chairmen there to bask in the glory of being associated with it, not to exploit it financially. Greater professionalism has led to safer grounds and a commercial idea of "customer care", but also to the shallow, blinkered concept that clubs are simply businesses, available to investors as vehicles to make money. Whatever the Premier League draws from its belated discovery of history, this is a major departure from the past.

DIGEST

NEWS AND REPORTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WS WORLD SOCCER

CLUB WORLD CUP

Inter's crown

Keir Radnedge reports on another Brazilian triumph in FIFA's revamped tournament

What's in a name?...Internacional's Luiz Adriano wheels away to celebrate the late winner by team-mate Adriano Viera while Barcelona's Carles Puyol just can't believe it

BARCELONA'S BRAZIL-BORN playmaker Deco was Man of the Tournament, and the Catalans' Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho attracted the greatest fan following, but it was Brazilian team Internacional who carried off the Club World Cup crown.

Their 1-0 win over Barca in the Final, against the run of play, provided Brazil with a second successive victory in the expanded and rebranded event. But the late drama provided by substitute Adriano Viera's winning goal could not hide the need for further elaboration of the entire concept.

FIFA's attempt to muscle in on the lucrative world of international club football has yet to convince it is anything more than mere political mechanics; maybe it is time to take the event away from Japan, where it still bears the stigma of the marketing exercise that was the rebranding and (literal) repositioning of the old World Club Cup back at the start of the 1980s.

The world federation is hoping to increase the size of the event by permitting the host federation to field a team of its own. But this would be just one more weary gesture to presentation rather than football; if the Club World Cup is to prosper, it needs to be shown off more widely.

After a cautious opening, Inter's teenage wonderkid Alexandre Pato headed just over from a corner, then Ronaldinho fired into the side-netting after keeper Clemer mishandled a long-range shot from Deco.

Eidur Gudjohnsen and Ronaldinho squandered further chances for the European champions, while Inter made so little headway at the other end that Alexandre, who had scored in his only two previous first-team games, was taken off after 61 minutes.

Cutting edge

Substitute Luiz Adriano gave Internacional a sharper cutting edge but it was Adriano Viera, on for injured captain Fernandao, who snatched the winner on the counter-attack after a delicate assist from Iarley.

The goal stunned Barcelona into raising the pace, Deco forcing a superb save from Clemer and Ronaldinho putting a free-kick narrowly wide, but to no avail.

In the tournament's opening game, Egypt's Al Ahly beat New Zealand part-timers Auckland City 2-0 to set up a semi-final against Internacional.

In the other quarter-final, America of Mexico beat South Korea's Chonbuk Motors 1-0 with a late goal from central defender Ricardo Rojas.

America should have scored after eight minutes when Chonbuk keeper Kwoun Sun-tae raced from goal only to push the ball into the path of Argentinian veteran Claudio Lopez. Surprised, the former Lazio and Valencia striker pulled his shot wide from 25 metres.

Chonbuk's Brazilians, Botti and Ze Carlo, both drew sharp saves from America keeper Guillermo Ochoa just after the hour, then the Mexicans snatched victory against the run of play when Rojas followed in a cross from Salvador Cabanas and bundled the ball home from close range.

Coach Luis Fernando Tena was clearly relieved, saying: "Not taking all the early chances we made nearly cost us big time. We cannot afford that luxury again."

Chonbuk coach Choi Kang-hee echoed Tena when he said: "Our team are young and inexperienced and we were intimidated in the first half. If we had taken our chances it might have been different."

Al Ahly not only enjoyed the experience of their semi-final, but also almost embarrassed Inter, losing only 2-1 and hitting a post.

Inter coach Abel Braga, hunting for excuses, said: "We felt the pressure both because this was the most important game in the club's 99-year history and because it was our first game and half the players were off form. Luck was with us."

Alexandre headed home after eight minutes only to be ruled offside. But there were no such problems in the 23rd minute when the teenager shot home from the edge of the area.

Al Ahly came close to an equaliser in the 38th minute when striker Mohamed Aboutraika fired against a post and their deserved goal arrived nine minutes into the second half from a fine header by Angolan Flavio, who had also scored against Auckland.

Alexandre was forced off by injury in the 65th minute but his replacement, Luiz Adriano, headed the winner with his first touch seven minutes after joining the game. It was his first professional goal.

Meanwhile, Barcelona had flown in, talking a good game as befitted their status as tournament favourites and determined to make amends for their 2-1 defeat by Sao Paulo in 1992, their only previous appearance in the world club decider.

Ronaldinho said: "We will not have much time to prepare and we will still have some jet-lag but this is serious business for us. Barcelona have never won the world club title and all the players want to be a part of history."

Captain Carles Puyol said: "It is extremely important for all of us to write a new chapter in Barca's history. We do not believe it will be easy but we have come here to win the title."

The first step was simple enough, in the Yokohama rain. Ronaldinho provided all the necessary inspiration and America were crushed 4-0.

Former Chelsea striker Gudjohnsen opened the scoring in the 11th minute, the Icelander converting a pass from Andres Iniesta after a sweeping three-man move launched by a Ronaldinho back-heel.

Defender Rafael Marquez doubled the lead on the half-hour against his countrymen, heading home a left-wing corner from Deco.

Ronaldinho added a third himself in the 65th minute after Ludovic Giuly had a shot blocked, and then the Brazilian set up Deco for the fourth five minutes from time.

Shattered

But of greater significance than the scoreline were the words of Barca coach Frank Rijkaard after the game. He said: "Our players were absolutely shattered. They are still suffering badly from jet-lag."

The question now was whether the Brazilians of Inter had more "legs" than Barcelona and their own Brazilian hero, who had begun his career with Inter's Porto Alegre rivals Gremio.

Ronaldinho said: "When I was a schoolboy at Gremio I remember there was a plaque on the wall that read: 'We are the world champions.' As a boy I wanted to win all the titles Gremio had, so it's always been an ambition of mine to win the world club competition. I know Gremio fans will also want Barcelona to win."

But Ronaldinho's return to the Yokohama stadium where he won the World Cup in 2002 was not destined to end in the same celebratory manner.

Braga was thrilled. He said: "I told my team we did not need to fear Barcelona and we shut the players in a room for 15 minutes yesterday to get their spirits up for this game. The only thing that would give me more joy would be to win this again next year – or to become coach of the Brazil national team and win the World Cup."

Meanwhile, a chastened Rijkaard shouldered the blame for a failure of preparation but insisted: "Losing one match is not the end of the world." In this case, of course, it was precisely that.

RESULTS

Centre of attention...Ronaldinho

QUARTER-FINALS
Auckland City-Al Ahly 0-2
Chonbuk Motors-America 0-1
Byes to semi-finals: Barcelona, Internacional

SEMI-FINALS
Al Ahly-Internacional 1-2
America-Barcelona 0-4

FIFTH-PLACE PLAY-OFF
Auckland City-Chonbuk Motors 0-3

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF
Al Ahly-America 2-1

FINAL
Internacional 1 (Adriano Viera 82)
Barcelona 0
HT: 0-0. Att: 67,128. Ref: Batres (Gtm)
Inter: Clemer - Ceara, Indio, Fabiano Eller, Rubens Cardoso - Edinho, Wellington Monteiro, Alex (Vargas 46), Fernandao (Adriano Viera 76) - Alexandre Pato (Luiz Adriano 61), Iarley.
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta (Belletti 46), Puyol, Marquez, Van Bronckhorst - Motta (Xavi 59), Iniesta, Deco, Giuly - Gudjohnsen (Ezquerro 88), Ronaldinho.

ITALY

Spend or I go, warns Del Piero

JUVENTUS, THE TARNISHED "Old Lady" of the Italian game, started the new year third in Serie B, only one point off the top, despite their nine-point penalty for match-fixing, but directors and players were showing dangerous complacency when talking as if promotion were already a certainty.

Stage whispers at board level were all about which new stars would be added to the ranks to propel Juve back up among the top-flight leaders. The chat from the players was all the usual coded stuff designed to ensure a significant pay rise once the formalities had been gone through.

The confidence about the return to Serie A was heightened by Juve's lively performance in the annual Berlusconi Trophy clash against Milan at the San Siro, which they narrowly lost 3-2. But their showing was clouded by warnings from both Alessandro Del Piero and Gianluigi Buffon that they will not be around in Turin, even if promotion is achieved, unless the club invest heavily in new talent.

Del Piero, who scored one of Juve's goals against Milan, said: "I keep reading and hearing that I will be here for the rest of my career but I've never said that. The task in hand is to get Juventus back up into Serie A. Beyond that, nothing is set in stone.

"Obviously, I'm very happy living in Turin…I've been here a long time now. But I am also a professional and I know that it is not enough to win promotion.

"Next season I want to be a member of a squad that – assuming we go up, which is far from certain – will be competitive and challenging up and around the top of the table. Every player wants to be involved in the Champions League, and when you are nearing the wrong end of your career you cannot hang around. That is why we lost some of our best players, such as Fabio Cannavaro, during the summer.

"He said if he had been younger he would not have gone to Real Madrid but that, once you are past 30, you need to make the most of the time you have left at the top level. I understand that. I hope the club does."

Buffon, Italy's World Cup-winning goalkeeper, echoed Del Piero's concerns about team strengthening. He said: "To go down in history as one of the cornerstones of a Juventus who finished 12th in Serie A would not be much satisfaction after everything I've achieved in my career.

"I need to feel there is something big to aim for. In the past few months, many Juventus officials have said how much they respect me. At a certain point, however, you have to stop and look at things from a purely footballing point of view and weigh up whether personal interests and the interests of the club coincide."

Juve lost the Berlusconi Trophy to a goal from 19-year-old striker Willy Aubameyang four minutes from the end. The French youngster, on as a second-half substitute, headed in Andrea Pirlo's cross.

The tie should have taken place last August but was postponed until the mid-season break because of the chaos caused by the match-fixing scandal.

Milan were rewarded for a bright start when Cristian Brocchi crossed for Filippo Inzaghi to shoot home in the 29th minute. Pavel Nedved equalised just before half-time, and Del Piero headed Juve in front from a free-kick midway through the second half, but Clarence Seedorf made it 2-2 a minute later, also with a header, which paved the way for Aubameyang's late strike.

Milan's victory was a further boost for the club, for whom Alberto Gilardino had made a return to goalscoring form a couple of weeks earlier. The 24-year-old national team striker hit both goals in the 2-2 draw at Fiorentina to end a barren run that had put him under great pressure.

The previous week, Gilardino had missed a penalty in a drab goalless draw at home to Torino – a blunder that raised howls of regret among the *Rossoneri* faithful that the club had not managed to achieve the proposed pre-season exchange of Gilardino for Juventus' David Trezeguet.

That, said Gilardino, was "one of the lowest times of my life. If it had not been for Alice, my girlfriend, and my parents I do not know where my career would have gone. I think that at one stage they were the only people in the world who had any faith in my ability. They never left me alone. They were always there to encourage me, cheer me up, tell me I could turn myself around."

Prandelli support

There was, however, at least one other offering encouragement and not surprised by Gilardino's ability to bounce back – Fiorentina coach Cesare Prandelli.

He said: "When I was coaching at Parma, Gilardino was one of my youth-team pupils. He is a great talent and I was always sure he would soon be back among the goals. My only wish is that he had waited just one more week."

Meanwhile, Milan's neighbours, Internazionale, have been cruising along at the top. A 2-1 win at home to Atalanta just before Christmas extended their league winning run to 11 games, a club record.

Ironically, while Juventus are apparently on the up, Zdenek Zeman, one of their chief accusers down the years, is out of a job yet again after being fired by struggling Lecce.

In an interview in 1998 the Czech coach queried the musculature of several Juventus players and said he believed that Serie A was the victim of a widespread doping culture.

Zeman's accusations led to a court case against Juve managers – and tape recordings of telephone conversations by investigators then led on to exposure of the match-fixing scandal that resulted in the club's demotion.

Zeman's 20-year coaching career has seen him at Foggia (twice), Parma, Messina, Lazio, Roma, Napoli, Salernitana, Avellino and Brescia. This was his second spell at Lecce.

Keir Radnedge

Alarm bells…Del Piero gets the plaudits from Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi after the Trophy match but knows his future at Juventus hangs in the balance

On the outside…Zeman, Juve's nemesis, has been fired by Lecce

GERMANY

Werder's winter warmer

BAYERN MUNICH general manager Uli Hoeness was spot on when he predicted last summer that his side would not easily complete a hat-trick of league titles. The team have rarely moved into high gear this season, handicapped by an uninspiring midfield – bereft of the thrust and charisma of Michael Ballack – and a misfiring attack. So they could have no complaints about being only third at the winter break, three points behind Werder Bremen, leaders on goal difference, and Schalke.

No fewer than seven clubs have topped the table this term, underlining the impression that Bayern's stranglehold has been broken, but Werder certainly deserved to be "winter champions". Their go-for-broke style continues to produce results and spectacle in equal measure. With Brazilian playmaker Diego having found his feet instantly following his move from FC Porto and striker Miroslav Klose as sharp as ever, Werder leave the rest far behind when it comes to attacking potency.

Goal happy...a rejuvenated Diego and Miroslav Klose are spearheading Werder's assault on the title

The team have scored six goals in a game on no fewer than three occasions, and their healthy average strike rate of 2.75 per match is testament to the adventurous philosophy of coach Thomas Schaaf – "We put into practice what every player wants. To score goals and enjoy themselves."

But midfield warrior Torsten Frings is certainly not counting any chickens nor writing off Bayern. "It's nice to be number one at the turnaround, but we know we face a hard battle to stay top in the new year," he says. "For me, we only have one rival. The road to the title will go through Bayern."

Frings, rumoured to be on the shopping list of Juventus, can take heart from Bundesliga history. Thirty times out of 43, the pacesetters at the halfway mark have gone on to claim the shield.

Self-destruct mode

Another lesson from the past is to always expect the unexpected at Schalke. Here is a club where in-fighting has become a way of life, and they were once again in self-destruct mode in the early stages of this season.

Germany striker Gerald Asamoah was banished from the squad for threatening trouble if he did not play more, only to be swiftly reinstated without having to make an apology; captain Marcelo Bordon complained of there being a "mole" in the dressing room leaking tittle-tattle to management; and disgruntled fans staged a silent protest during a 2-2 home draw with Bayern in the wake of elimination from the UEFA Cup and German Cup and a string of away defeats.

Coach Mirko Slomka's days looked numbered, but the board held their nerve and were vindicated when the Royal Blues won six of the next seven, during which the players boycotted the media.

Curiously, the stars of the Schalke renaissance are all to be found at the back. The constant raids of full-backs Rafinha and Christian Pander (the latter only recently returned to the fold after 19 months out with a knee injury) is a key facet of their gameplan, while new keeper Manuel Neuer has impressed greatly since replacing out-of-favour veteran Frank Rost.

Stuttgart are also still in with a shout in the championship having gone into the break in fourth spot, just a point behind Bayern. Coach Armin Veh's insistence on a thoughtful, short-passing game is bearing fruit, and a number of their youngsters seem to have a very bright future indeed, particularly defender Serdar Tasci, midfielder Sami Khedira and Spanish-German striker Mario Gomez.

The relegation alarm bells are ringing loud and clear at bottom side Mainz and Hamburg, just two points better off, who each won just one of their opening 17 games. Hamburg, also abject in the Champions League this autumn, can forget all the pre-season talk of returning to the European top table. Survival in the top flight is the only item on their agenda now, and given the low morale in the camp, an escape route will be hard to plot.

Nick Bidwell

Bonjour, Paris...Argentinian midfielder Marcelo Gallardo arrives for his first day at work with PSG

FRANCE

PSG on a downer

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN, who started the season with hopes of challenging Lyon for the title, went into the winter break just two points above the relegation zone after being held to a 1-1 draw at fellow strugglers Troyes.

In an attempt to halt the slump, coach Bernard Lacombe made a quick move into the transfer market, bringing in Argentinian playmaker Marcelo Gallardo from River Plate. The 31-year-old has already tasted success in France, winning the title with Monaco in 2000, and he still has a reputation as a creative force. But whether he has the stomach to scrap for the points PSG so desperately need is open to debate.

The club's other new signing as we went to press was France's former No 1 tennis player Yannick Noah, who is to act as some kind of motivational guru.

Nantes pulled themselves out of the relegation zone with a 4-0 thumping of Toulouse on the last matchday of the year. The result no doubt raised a smile from Fabien Barthez, now at Nantes, who had hoped to join Toulouse, his hometown club, last summer to wind down his career. But Toulouse rejected his advances, prompting the keeper to hang up his gloves entirely – until Nantes boss Georges Eo coaxed him back for one last stint.

Barthez did not play in the defeat of Toulouse because he was injured, but on his return to training after Christmas, there were rumours all was not well in the camp. The keeper was reportedly spotted leaving midway through a session, apparently unhappy about being asked to work with non-first-team defenders.

Cisse return

Marseille's shortcomings have been overshadowed by PSG's slump, but the fact is they were expecting to be higher than sixth at New Year. The return to action of forward Djibril Cisse after a broken leg has been a bright spot, and he scored in the 2-1 home win against Saint-Etienne just before Christmas. But talk of takeovers, Sven Goran Eriksson coming in as manager and, of course, Franck Ribery leaving means that it is business as usual at the Velodrome.

Over at the federation, the question of who would succeed the retiring Aime Jacquet as national technical director has been answered – partly. Jean-Pierre Morlans, right-hand man to four France coaches – Jacquet, Gerard Houllier, Henri Michel and Michel Hidalgo – has finally been given his day in the sun. The trouble is Morlans is 64, meaning that come June he will be forced to retire, too.

The hot tip is that Houllier will take the role, for a second time, after leading Lyon to an almost inevitable sixth straight league title.

Howard Johnson

HOLLAND

Trouble at Feyenoord

Response unit...riot police prepare to deal with disturbances at the Feyenoord fans' end of Nancy's ground

THERE HAS BEEN more turbulence at troubled Feyenoord, with the club fined for crowd disturbances at two UEFA Cup matches and under-pressure chairman Jorien Van den Herik finally stepping down after 14 years in charge.

Feyenoord were fined £85,000 after their fans caused mayhem at French club Nancy. Police had to use teargas, and play was interrupted for 20 minutes, when hooligans began throwing seats on to the pitch. Feyenoord supporters had earlier run amok in the town centre, smashing shop windows.

The Rotterdam club were also handed a £8,100 fine after an incident at the home UEFA Cup tie against Blackburn the previous week, when visiting player Morten Gamst Pedersen was hit by a plastic cup of beer thrown by a Feyenoord fan.

Van den Herik saved the club from bankruptcy when he took charge but had been widely blamed in recent months for Feyenoord's current financial predicament. This meant there was a lack of quality signings last summer despite the sale of Dirk Kuijt and Salomon Kalou, and so, not surprisingly, a mediocre showing on the pitch in the autumn.

Van den Herik's only consolation was being cleared of tax fraud in relation to the signing of Australian Aurelio Vidmar from Standard Liege in 1995.

There has also been trouble at Ajax, who were second at New Year but 11 points behind PSV Eindhoven, with forward Kenneth Perez banned for five matches after making racist comments to a linesman.

The Amsterdam club, meanwhile, saw off competition from PSV and Tottenham to sign Brazilian Leonardo from NAC Breda on a two-year contract.

Louis Van Gaal, coach of third-placed AZ Alkmaar, turned to former Rangers keeper Ronald Waterreus after both Joey Didulica and Khalid Sinouh suffered injuries. Waterreus, who has been without a club since leaving Ibrox last summer, was forced to sign a contract until the end of the season as temporary deals are not allowed in Holland. However, the former PSV keeper will leave during the winter break since he has set his mind on playing in the USA.

Twente Enschede's Georgian winger Georgi Gakhokidze has been forced to retire at the age of 31 because of persistent injury.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

BELGIUM

Club Brugge suffer derby blues

Club Brugge's poor autumn campaign ended dismally as they lost 1-0 away to city rivals Cercle, their first defeat in the fixture since 1993. Fittingly, Frederik Boi, the only Bruges-born player in the derby, scored the goal and was rapidly rewarded with a two-year contract extension.

The previous week, Club Brugge had contrived to throw away a 4-1 lead at home to Standard Liege to draw 4-4 and had slipped to fourth place at the winter break, nine points behind leaders Genk.

Bottom side Lierse secured their first league win of the season in the final minute of the final game before New Year, at home to Lokeren, when Kristof Snelders grabbed the only goal. But the club were still 10 points adrift.

Champions Anderlecht, three points behind Genk in second place, beat cup holders Zulte-Waregem 3-1 in the Super Cup.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Zurich march on

ZURICH ARE ON course for a second successive championship after beating closest challengers Sion 2-1 at home on the final matchday of the autumn campaign to stretch their lead to eight points.

Alvaro Saborio put the visitors ahead in the 21st minute but Xavier Margairaz equalised midway through the second half and Finnish defender Hannu Tihinen headed the winner six minutes later.

The result made Sion's controversial president Christian Constantin distinctly unfestive, and as the winter break began he was heard grumbling that bad refereeing decisions had robbed his club of at least eight points this campaign. Constantin said he would continue to press the FA to introduce professional referees and referee exchanges with other associations.

Ivar von Rulach

Back in the hunt...Xavier Margairaz equalises for Zurich against Sion

PORTUGAL

Porto's cup upset

League leaders FC Porto will not be able to repeat last season's Double exploits after suffering an embarrassing 1-0 home cup defeat to third division Atletico.

Benfica easily made it into the last 16 with a 5-0 win over Olivais e Moscavide. The game marked the return of playmaker Rui Costa after a three-month injury lay-off. However, the Eagles will be without another midfielder, Nuno Assis, for the rest of the season after a doping ban was confirmed by the courts.

Porto bought Argentinian defender Lucas Mareque from River Plate in the first notable deal of the transfer window.

Pedro Pinto

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Derry merry after stunning St Pat's

Derry City came from behind three times against St Patrick's Athletic in a dramatic FAI Cup Final before snatching an extra-time winner, an own goal by Stephen Brennan as he attempted to head clear at a corner.

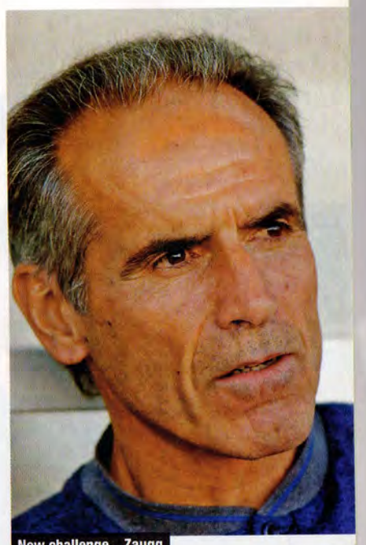
The victory capped a fine season for the Candystripes, who also won the League Cup and finished runners-up to Shelbourne in the League. It also meant that coach Stephen Kenny finished his spell at the club on a high, having agreed to take charge of Scottish Premier League side Dunfermline.

Kenny's successor is Pat Fenlon, who steered Shelbourne to the championship but then quit the Dublin club, which has been beset by financial problems in recent months. Fenlon led Shels to three titles in four years.

The new FAI Eircom League board caused consternation at Dundalk when deciding to promote Galway United instead of them, along with second level champions Shamrock Rovers. Dundalk had finished runners-up, two points ahead of Galway in third place, and also beat Waterford United, the top flight's bottom club, in a two-leg play-off. However, the new administration examines criteria other than league position, such as stadium suitability, when deciding on promotion and relegation issues.

One disgruntled Dundalk fan threatened to set himself alight after dousing himself in petrol in the reception area of the FAI offices in Dublin.

Sean Creedon


New challenge...Zaugg

LIECHTENSTEIN

Zaugg takes charge

Former Switzerland coach Hans-Peter Zaugg has been handed the Liechtenstein national team job on a three-year contract. The 54-year-old was among more than 50 applicants for the post, which became vacant when Martin Andermatt quit to take charge of Berne club Young Boys.

Zaugg led Switzerland for six months in 2000 and went on to steer Grasshopper to the Swiss league title in 2001. His other club posts have included Neuchatel Xamax, Lucerne and Young Boys. His first Liechtenstein match will be the Euro 2008 qualifier at home to Northern Ireland on March 24.

Graeme Crawford

AUSTRIA

Rapid bank on Boskovic

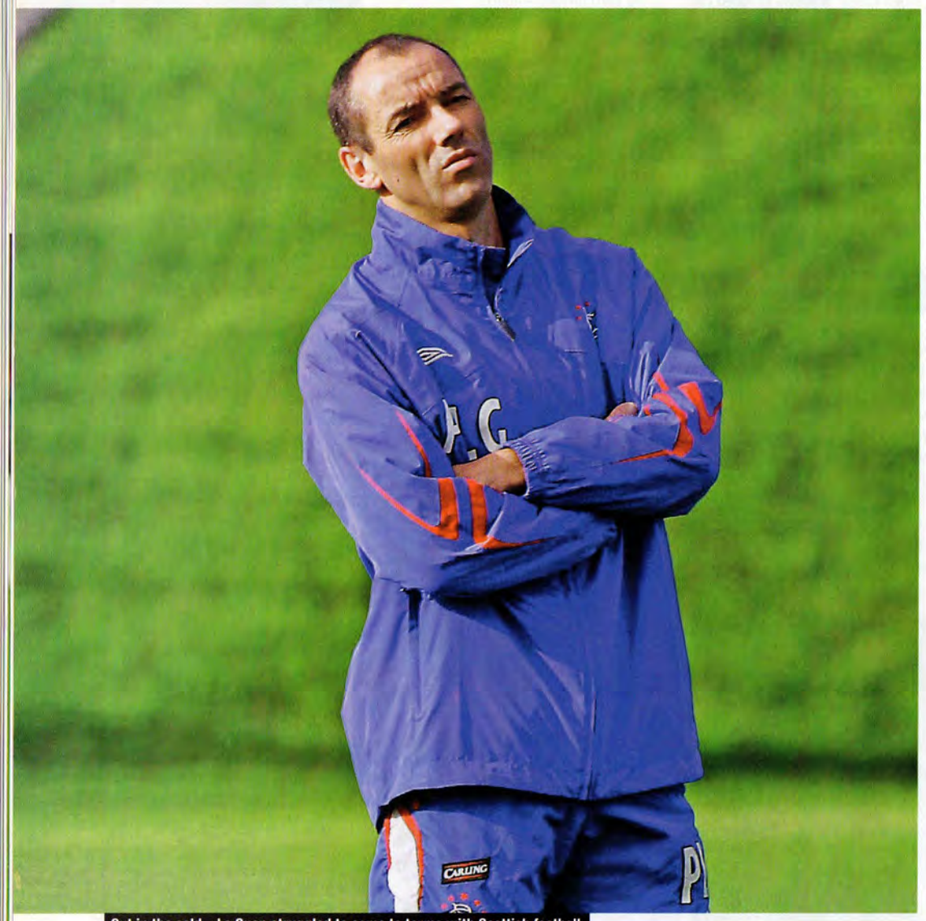
Rapid Wien have brought Serb striker Branko Boskovic out of the wilderness in a bid to turn around their fortunes after a dismal autumn. The record champions even dropped to the foot of the table for the first time in their 105-year history, and though they had climbed to third from bottom by the winter break, they were still in trouble.

Boskovic, who has joined until the end of the season, had been without a club since parting company with Paris Saint-Germain last summer after a season-long loan at another French club, Troyes. "It was good experience playing in such a highly technical league, and I'm sure I can bring some of that quality to Rapid," he said.

Harry Miltner

SCOTLAND

Le Guen makes rapid exit


Out in the cold...Le Guen struggled to come to terms with Scottish football

PAUL LE GUEN'S troubled reign at Rangers ended after just seven months with the club 17 points adrift of champions Celtic and in the wake of his decision to strip Barry Ferguson of the captaincy and drop him in the belief he had undermined his authority.

The Frenchman led Lyon to three straight league titles but struggled to find his feet in the Scottish game. His behaviour towards Ferguson, an iconic figure at Ibrox, appeared to have been the final straw for the board. Chairman David Murray said: "Having met with Paul we agreed jointly to him stepping down in the interests of the club."

Le Guen had made it clear he had not acted against Ferguson because of his form on the pitch, saying: "He is a great player and I am respectful of what he has done here. That's why I kept him as the captain when I arrived. But now I have decided to change. I must feel we are all together. I am fully aware of the impact of this decision but I am the manager, I am the boss." Three days later that was no longer the case.

Le Guen's tenure was the shortest in Rangers' history.

Meanwhile, former Hearts captain Steven Pressley has found a new home at Celtic following his bust-up with the Tynecastle management and subsequent parting of the ways. The centre-back's sudden availability was very welcome to the Bhoys, who had lost Guinea defender Bobo Balde with a broken leg and also had Scotland centre-back Gary Caldwell sidelined by injury.

Alan Fairley

DENMARK

Junior Laudrups' senior service

The third generation of Laudrups have begun their senior careers. Mads Laudrup, the 17-year-old son of Michael Laudrup, nephew of Brian and grandson of Finn, made his first-team debut as a substitute for champions FC Copenhagen in a 1-0 Royal League defeat at home to Lillestrom of Norway.

Mads' younger brother Andreas, 16, spent December training with Ajax with a view to starting his professional career at the club, where his father also played. Andreas, who has been kept apart from his brother on purpose so they can develop separately, has been in the junior set-up at Danish side Lyngby.

Denmark right-back Lars Jacobsen has agreed to leave FC Copenhagen for Bundesliga club Nurnberg.

Jim Holden

FINLAND

MyPa go for Togolese

MyPa, the league champions in 2005, have signed Togo midfielder Kuami Agboh from Auxerre. The 29-year-old was in his country's World Cup squad last summer. "Naturally, Kuami will have to adjust to his new surroundings, but he is an experienced professional who has been in Europe for 10 years now," said MyPa coach Ilkka Makela.

Sierra Leone youth international keeper Patrick Bantamoi has joined Inter Turku from relegated KuPS. The 20-year-old is regarded by many as the best keeper in the League.

Over at TPS Turku, new coach Mixu Paatelainen began by signing his younger brother Mikko from Jaro and English midfielder Chris Cleaver from Sweden's Sundsvall.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Magnusson leaves his mark

The speed with which new West Ham chairman Eggert Magnusson dispensed with manager Alan Pardew and replaced him with Alan Curbishley will have caused little surprise to those familiar with his record as Icelandic FA president. Magnusson oversaw the arrival and departure of no fewer than eight national coaches during his 17-year reign.

But Magnusson cannot be accused of not having his country's football at heart. During his tenure, the infrastructure of Icelandic football improved significantly, both at national and grassroots level, with the most visible part of his legacy being the recent refurbishment of the national stadium.

Rab Christie

Striking display...Nannskog's 19 goals for Stabaek have earned him a call-up

SWEDEN

Late chance for Nannskog

DANIEL NANNSKOG is in line to make his debut for Sweden at the age of 32 after being named in the squad to tour South America in February. He was called up after hitting a league-high 19 goals for Norwegians Stabaek last season.

Nannskog, who has never been capped at any level, played in Sweden for Djurgardens and Landskrona before trying his luck in China with Shanghai Shenhua. He joined Stabaek in 2005. "Daniel has certainly had a colourful career but he has made tremendous progress both as a player and as a person in Norway," said Sweden coach Lars Lagerback.

Meanwhile, Lagerback has managed to persuade wayward Internazionale star Zlatan Ibrahimovic to return to the international fold for the Euro 2008 qualifiers. Ibrahimovic turned his back on the team in the autumn after being disciplined for missing a curfew at a training camp in September.

Malmo have signed Orgryte midfielder Ola Toivonen, thought by many to be Sweden's next big international star, and Hacken's Liberia defender Jimmy Dixon.

Pentti Hietanen

NORWAY

Three through, one out

BRANN, LILLESTROM and Valerenga are all top of their respective groups in Scandinavia's Royal League, with places in the last eight assured. In contrast, domestic champions Rosenborg are out having failed to win any of their six games. Brann gained some revenge for losing out in the Norwegian title race by beating Rosenborg 3-1 away then 3-2 at home.

Despite his side's poor showing, Rosenborg coach Knut Torum has signed a new three-year deal. He has also been busy in the transfer market, bringing in Ivorians Didier Konan and Abdoulrazak Traore plus Swedish defender Fredrik Stoor (Helsingborgs). Steffen Iversen has signed a new, long-term contract, but veteran Orjan Berg has retired because of injury.

Cup-holders Fredrikstad have parted company with coach Knut Thorbjorn Eggen after a dispute about who would oversee football development at the club.

Sigurd Odegaard

Royal League rumble...Rosenborg's Hyka tussles with Haugen of Brann

LATVIA

Maris heads for Spain

National team forward Maris Verpakovskis has become the first Latvian to join a Spanish team after securing a half-year loan deal at Getafe from Kyiv Dynamo. The Madrid club have the option of signing the 27-year-old permanently for £1million in the summer.

Two other national team players – defender Maris Smirnovs and reserve keeper Deniss Romanovs – have both left Ditton Daugavpils for Dinamo Bucharest on two-and-a-half-year deals.

Latvia's first-choice keeper Aleksandrs Kolinko has been named Player of the Year for the first time. The 31-year-old is currently with Russian club Rubin Kazan.

Andres Must

ESTONIA

Second shot for Smirnov

Vjatsheslav Smirnov has taken charge of 2005 champions TVMK for the second time. Smirnov, who has a one-year contract, was previously in charge in 2001. The position became vacant when Russian Sergei Yuran unexpectedly quit in November to take charge of Shinnik Yaroslavl in his homeland.

National team keeper Martin Kaalma has joined champions Levadia Tallinn from Trans Narva in a two-year deal, while Flora Tallinn defender Karl Palatu has moved to Norwegian second division club Sogndal.

Andres Must

WALES

Festive for top two

The top two had a happy holiday period, leaders Rhyl beating Connah's Quay 2-1 and Cwmbran 1-0, while The New Saints stayed just two points behind with two games in hand after delivering two thrashings – 6-0 against Welshpool Town and 7-0 against struggling Airbus UK. John Toner led the Saints' scoring spree with a hat-trick in both games.

Title hopefuls Llanelli slipped to fourth after a run of four games without a win.

Caernarfon Town stayed bottom after taking only a point from their two derbies with Bangor. Their only consolation was a league-high crowd for the season of 1,007 for the home Boxing Day game, which they lost 1-0.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Glentoran's trophy

Glentoran won the first trophy of the season, and their first silverware under manager Paul Millar, when beating Cliftonville 1-0 in the League Cup Final thanks to Gary Hamilton's 31st-minute goal.

However, the east Belfast club lost their unbeaten record in the League, going down at home to Portadown and then at Ballymena United in consecutive games, both 3-2, to allow champions Linfield to close to within two points of them at the top. Linfield and Glentoran drew 1-1 in Belfast's traditional Boxing Day derby.

Ronnie McFall, who has just celebrated 20 years in charge of Portadown – now up to third – has signed former Northern Ireland Under-21 forward Kevin Braniff from Millwall.

Roy Kitson

Slice of luck...Partizan goalkeeper Nikolas Asprogenis and his defence are all over the place as Rangers' Gavin Rae hits a post during the UEFA Cup group match at Ibrox

SERBIA

War rages at Partizan

PARTIZAN BELGRADE ended their wretched year by losing four out of five matches and drawing the other, a run that heightened the supporters' animosity towards the club management.

In the League, a 1-1 draw away to neighbours OFK sent the club into the winter break in fourth place, 14 points behind leaders and city rivals Red Star. Partizan ended their UEFA Cup campaign with a 1-0 defeat at Rangers to finish bottom of Group A with a single point from four games.

The fans mounted street demonstrations after the OFK game and one group wrote an open letter in which they asked leading politicians to step in to resolve the crisis at the club, more specifically to stop the management's alleged criminal activities and to replace general secretary Zarko Zecevic and sports director Nenad Bjekovic. During the demonstrations, fans carried a cross bearing Zecevic's name and 2006 as the year of his death.

Partizan launched a counter-attack, also in an open letter, labelling the supporters group in question as liars, slanderers, hooligans and racketeers, adding that the club would win the war.

Businessman Nenad Popovic was subsequently appointed the new chairman, in succession to Ivan Curkovic, and the board was revamped, but the changes did not satisfy the fans because Zecevic and Bjekovic held on to their jobs.

As expected, it was announced that head coach Miodrag Jesic would be replaced, with former national team defender Miroslav Djukic his likely successor. Djukic is currently coach of the Under-21 team and needed FA permission before taking on a club role simultaneously.

Jesic was not the only coach to feel the winter chill since OFK's young coach Slobodan Krcmarevic was also sacked. His replacement is Ratko Dostanic, who was previously at Slavia Sofia.

National team forward Nikola Zigic, who joined Racing Santander from Red Star in August, has been named Player of the Year.

Vladimir Novak

CROATIA

Nowotny not up to scratch

Dinamo Zagreb were league leaders going into the winter break, three points clear of arch-rivals Hajduk Split, but the form of former Germany stalwart Jens Nowotny has been very disappointing. New coach Branko Ivankovic now has to decide whether to drop the defender, who arrived with great fanfare last summer.

Off the field, Dinamo have been buoyed by the signing of three young talents – Josip Tadic from Bayer Leverkusen and Darijo Jertec and Nikola Pokrivac from Varteks. Hajduk Split, meanwhile, can look forward to having centre-forward prodigy Ante Rukavina from next summer after agreeing a deal with his club, Sibenik.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Fuad back for the future

Fuad Muzurovic, the national team's first coach, is back in charge following the departure of Blaz Sliskovic. The 61-year-old announced that one of his priorities would be to speak to players who had drifted out of the national team picture under his predecessor and persuade them to return, among them Hasan Salihamidzic of Bayern Munich.

Muzurovic is also aiming to set up a friendly against Albania as his first match back at the helm, for historical reasons. The coach was originally in charge during hard times for Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 1995 to 1997, when there was little money and neither Croat nor Serb players wanted to appear for the team.

"I remember November 30, 1995 [the date of Bosnia's first game, against Albania]," Muzurovic said. "We travelled to Tirana by bus with just 12 players and had no kit or equipment. The Albanians had to lend us everything."

Muzurovic was sacked after the team failed to qualify for France 98. Since then he has coached several foreign clubs, including Turkey's Adanaspor and Japan's Cerezo Osaka.

Zdravko Reic

MONTENEGRO

Clubs up for the cups

UEFA has granted Montenegrin clubs entry to European cup competitions from the 2007-08 season. The league winners will start in the Champions League first qualifying round, while the cup winners will play in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round.

Striker Igor Burzanovic has been named Player of the Year. The 21-year-old has just joined Red Star Belgrade from leaders Buducnost.

Vladimir Novak

MACEDONIA

Brazilian striker dies at 29

Pobeda Prilep striker Rogerio Ricardo Oliveira has died of a heart attack in Skopje at the age of 29. The Brazilian had only just returned to Pobeda, his original Macedonian club, from Shkendija Tetovo but had not played in recent months because of a knee injury. Oliveira became the first Brazilian to play in the Macedonian League when joining Pobeda in 1996 and was league top scorer with them in the 1998-99 season with 22 goals. He also appeared for Rabotnicki Kometal and Vardar Skopje.

Sileks' Serb striker Stevica Ristic, the current league top scorer, has been called up to the Macedonian national team after being granted citizenship.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Beitar by a whisker

Big-spending Beitar Jerusalem were on top after 14 rounds but only on goal difference from SC Ashdod. Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv both reached the UEFA Cup last 32 convincingly but have failed to reproduce that form in the League and were four points off the pace.

Maccabi Netanya have reappointed Reuven Atar as coach after dismissing Eli Guttman. Atar led Netanya to seventh place last season but left last summer because of a personality clash with midfielder Eyal Berkovic, who has since left the club.

Ori Lewis

CYPRUS

Ze Elias fails to make grade

Omonia's capture of former Internazionale and Brazil midfielder Ze Elias last summer appeared to be a real coup. But after recovering from injury the 30-year-old failed to impress coach Ioan Antone in training and has largely been consigned to the bench. A disgruntled Ze Elias has warned he will not wait much longer to become a first-team regular.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

Merry Marsaxlokk

Marsaxlokk went into the new year six points clear at the top by beating Floriana 1-0 away on December 30. Sliema Wanderers, under new coach Ray Farrugia, extended their winning run to five games after beating champions Birkirkara 1-0.

Domenico Aquilina

GREECE

Lemonis retakes the reins

TAKIS LEMONIS has been reappointed coach of champions Olympiakos, just over four years after the end of his previous spell in charge. He succeeds Norwegian Trond Sollied, who was fired in late December despite the club being top of the League and on course for their third straight title. But he appears to have paid the price after the club failed to make it through the Champions League group stage for the second season running.

Lemonis, who recently quit as Xanthi boss, is thought to have been handed the reins until the end of the season.

The 47-year-old, also a former Olympiakos player, was previously at the helm from November 2000 to October 2002, during which he led the club to two domestic championships but was fired during another Champions League flop. His other coaching positions have included Kallithea, Levadiakos and Cypriot side APOEL. He is the Piraeus club's 31st coach since 1979.

Olympiakos did not even make it into the UEFA Cup this season, just like last term, missing out on third place in their Champions League group after managing only a 1-1 draw at home to Shakhtar Donetsk.

"I expected to be fired after the Shakhtar game...not now," said Sollied, who was three-quarters of the way through his two-year contract. "But there were five important games to go before Christmas, so maybe that's why I didn't go sooner."

Lou Economopoulos

I'm back...Lemonis has succeeded Trond Sollied in Piraeus

Demands...Zahovic

SLOVENIA

Appointment cancelled

FORMER NATIONAL team captain Darko Milanic, the federation's favoured candidate to succeed Branko Oblak as Slovenia coach, threw a spanner in the works by insisting that Zlatko Zahovic be named as his general manager.

Zahovic, Slovenia's best player in recent times, is a controversial figure who has had many clashes with national team coaches and the federation over the years. Just before Oblak left, Zahovic demanded the resignation of federation president Rudi Zavrl. Despite this, in the wake of Milanic's proviso, Zavrl spoke to Zahovic to see if they could find a way to work together. But, according to the president, Zahovic again suggested he step down, saying he was "not immortal", as well as demanding complete free rein in his new role, including the right to decide on any changes in the coaching staff.

This effectively scuppered the appointment of Milanic, currently assistant coach at Sturm Graz.

Zdravko Reic

RUSSIA

Can Lokomotiv carry their two big bears?

Driving wheel...Lokomotiv's new president Yuri Semin still harbours coaching ambitions

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW now have two former national team coaches at the helm as they seek to recapture their glory days in the League. Yuri Semin, who was Lokomotiv coach two years ago before leaving to become Russia boss, has been installed as president, and Anatoli Byshovets, who had two spells with the senior national team and led the Olympic side to gold in 1988, has replaced Oleg Dolmatov as coach.

The duo have been set the task of finishing in the top two this year and winning the title in 2008 by Lokomotiv's owners, the powerful Russian Railways company. The club finished third last year, missing out on Champions League entry, despite having twice beaten eventual champions CSKA Moscow. Lokomotiv were title winners in 2002 and 2004.

The Railwaymen's elimination by Belgium's Zulte-Waregem in the first round of the UEFA Cup cost Serbo-French coach Slavoljub Muslin his job and, as expected, Dolmatov proved to be a temporary replacement.

Although Byshovets, 60, has good international experience, having also coached in South Korea and Portugal, he had long been ignored by Russian clubs, mainly because of his high wage demands. Semin, replaced by Guus Hiddink at the Russia helm last year, is a club president for the first time but the 59-year-old still has big coaching ambitions. A Russian proverb says two bears can hardly fit into one cave, so only time will tell if there is enough room on the Lokomotiv for Semin and Byshovets.

Victor Gusev

ROMANIA

Dinamo in the clear

Dinamo Bucharest appear to have the league title sewn up already after establishing a 13-point lead over closest challengers and city rivals Steaua at the winter break. Dinamo dropped only five points in 19 games to date, a record.

However, the leaders suffered a major blow when top scorer Ionel Ganea unexpectedly quit to join Rapid Bucharest, currently third in the table. According to Rapid owner George Copos, the 33-year-old, who hit 13 league goals in the autumn, is now on £235,000 a year, making him the highest-paid player in Romania.

Ganea's contract also contains a special clause stating that he will be appointed as a Rapid vice-president for a two-year period after he ends his playing career.

Adrian Mutu has been named Player of the Year after scoring 10 goals for Fiorentina and three for the national team this season.

Radu Timofte

MOLDOVA

Dobrovolsky steps up

Igor Dobrovolsky has been promoted from assistant to lead the national team following the resignation of Anatoly Teslev. The 39-year-old former USSR and Russia midfielder, who has also concurrently been player-coach at top division side Tiligul Tiraspol, has a contract until the end of the Euro 2008 qualifiers, with the option of a further two years.

Moldova have taken only one point from their first four qualifiers and are bottom of Group C, but Dobrovolsky said: "There is no sense in talking about how many points we will get and where we will finish in our group. The most important thing for me is to create a team and start earning points from match to match."

Miron Golhman

BULGARIA

CSKA have added steel

CSKA Sofia, the country's most successful club, are now under new ownership after Vassil Bozhkov sold his majority shareholding to Indian steel magnate Pramod Mittal for about £10million. Bozhkov, reputedly Bulgaria's richest man, had owned CSKA since 2001.

Mittal, whose worldwide holdings include a 71 per cent stake in Bulgaria's best-known steelworks, Kremikovtsi, just outside Sofia, also owns Romanian club Otelul Galati.

Interestingly, his right-hand man at CSKA is former Bulgarian deputy Prime Minister Alexander Tomov. The management team also includes former national team forward Emil Kostadinov.

Atletico Madrid winger Martin Petrov has been named Bulgaria's Player of the Year after scoring a number of important goals for the national team in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Rumen Paytashev

Don't mess with me...Italian referee Tiziano Pieri was brought in by Kyiv Dynamo to ensure a game stayed bribery free

UKRAINE

Surkis takes bribery stand

FEDERATION PRESIDENT Hryhorii Surkis has vowed to end bribery of referees within the Ukrainian game after claiming that the practice is widespread.

"I've talked to many of our referees, and they confessed that Premier League clubs had offered them money and they accepted it," Surkis said. "I can't tolerate it any more. I'll do everything I can to kick offenders out of football."

Top clubs such as Shakhtar Donetsk, Kyiv Dynamo and Metalurh Donetsk have already taken measures to protect themselves from bribed match officials by paying for foreign referees to officiate big games. For example, Portuguese Paulo Gomes Costa refereed the Dynamo v Shakhtar clash in November, and Italian Tiziano Pieri took charge of Dynamo's game at Dnipro the previous month. In total, the three clubs have spent some £65,000 on this this season.

Dnipro, too, are considering similar moves. "We've worked out that prejudiced refereeing cost us 14 points in the first half of the season," said general director Andriy Stetsenko.

Ukrainian clubs are allowed to bring in foreign referees for domestic games as long as they pay for extra costs such as air tickets and accommodation. But this growing trend has its critics. Ivan Gaivoronsky, vice-president of the Donetsk Football Federation, says: "The use of foreign officials means local referees cannot progress and reach a higher level. If there is mistrust about them in our League it means UEFA will never have confidence in them. We have to restore the trust in and respect towards our referees."

Former AZ Alkmaar and Porto coach Co Adriaanse has taken charge of Metalurh Donetsk, replacing Spaniard Angel Alonso. Adriaanse's fellow Dutchman Tom Kaanen has been sacked by bottom-placed Stal, Oleg Taran has replaced Olexander Kosevich at Kryvbas, and Anatoliy Volobuyev is the new boss at Zorya.

Oleg Zadernovsky

CZECH REPUBLIC

Keepers set to leave

An exodus of goalkeepers was on the cards as the transfer window opened, with Slovan Liberec's Marek Cech set to join Russian side Luch-Energiya of Vladivostok, Brno No 1 Martin Lejsal linked with a move to Middlesbrough, and Leeds giving a trial to Slavia Prague's Matus Kozacik.

The future of national team defender Rene Bolf is uncertain after he suffered a serious knee injury playing for hometown team Vigantice in a friendly. The 32-year-old has been a free agent since November, when he was released by Auxerre, but had been expected to find a new club when the transfer window reopened.

Neither Liberec, Mlada Boleslav nor Sparta Prague advanced from the UEFA Cup group phase, ending Czech involvement in European competition this season.

Sam Beckwith

HUNGARY

Young guns firing for MTK

MTK went into the winter break five points clear of defending champions Debrecen after a 2-0 home defeat of Zalaegerszeg, the other title challengers, on the final matchday.

The stars of Jozsef Garami's young side have been teenage strikers Adam Hrepka and Krisztian Nemeth and 22-year-old attacking midfielder Jozsef Kanta. Between them, the trio scored 25 of MTK's 34 goals in the 17-game autumn campaign.

Peter Varhidi has been handed a one-year contract as national coach after impressing as interim boss. The 48-year-old's young squad beat Canada 1-0 in November in what had been expected to be his only game in charge, but he was asked to stay on after talks between the FA and its favoured long-term candidate, Romanian Laszlo Boloni, fell through.

Peterjon Cresswell

POLAND

Okuka chopped

WISLA KRAKOW fired Serb coach Dragomir Okuka after just three months at the helm following the team's group stage exit from the UEFA Cup and mediocre showing in the League. His replacement is Adam Nawalka, who has twice coached the team in the past and has recently been sporting director.

The 49-year-old is Wisla's 18th coaching appointment in the nine-year reign of controversial owner Boguslaw Cupial, whose quick-fire methods have led to him being dubbed the "Polish Jesus Gil" by the media.

Wisla were fifth in the League at the winter break, five points behind leaders GKS Belchatow. However, Nawalka says: "I believe we will be champions. That is why I have accepted the challenge."

Borussia Dortmund and Poland forward Euzebiusz Smolarek has retained his Footballer of the Year title in recognition of his key contribution to the national team's improved showing in the Euro 2008 qualifiers. "Ebi" scored both goals in the 2-1 win against Portugal in October, in a team performance that was widely regarded as the best for decades.

Dariusz Kurowski

Goodbye, Wisla...Dragomir Okuka

ARGENTINA

Simeone's Boca shocker

FORMER NATIONAL TEAM captain Diego Simeone capped the fine start to his coaching career by steering Estudiantes de La Plata to a shock triumph in the opening championship. The team trailed leaders Boca Juniors by four points with two games to play, but the Buenos Aires side, seemingly on course for their third straight title, contrived to lose both of them and against mediocre opposition – Belgrano and Lanus – while Estudiantes drew with Argentinos Juniors and beat Arsenal to claw back the deficit.

The fact that the championship contenders finished level on points forced a play-off, which Estudiantes won 2-1. Martin Palermo put Boca ahead in the fourth minute, but Jose Sosa equalised midway through the second half and Mariano Pavone grabbed the winner 10 minutes from time to give Estudiantes their first title since 1983.

Feeling champion...Simeone is held aloft after Estudiantes' title play-off triumph over Boca

Boca's dramatic capitulation prompted the resignation of coach Ricardo Lavolpe, who had been in charge for only three months.

Simeone, who won 106 caps, began his coaching career in difficult circumstances. He joined his favourite team, Racing Club, in 2005 as a player with the intention of retiring at the end of the 2005-06 season. But with the side bottom in February last year, a few games into the closing campaign, he was asked to take the coaching reins and managed to move them up the table with five wins in eight games.

However, boardroom changes led to Simeone being unceremoniously dumped to make way for former title-winning coach Reinaldo Merlo. Racing's loss was Estudiantes' gain, as Simeone turned a mid-table team into champions in a few short months and with virtually no changes in the playing staff.

Motivational powers

Simeone's first task was to restructure a defence that had let in 31 goals in 19 closing championship games in the 2005-06 season. His success is there for all to see – just 12 conceded in the recent campaign, the lowest in the division. The coach's motivational powers were equally important. Pavone said: "We start winning during his pre-match talks."

But Simeone was also clearly helped by the arrival of Juan Sebastian Veron, his former Argentina team-mate and the one key addition to the squad since the closing campaign. Veron was undoubtedly the best player in the opening championship, and the combination of Simeone on the sidelines, always impeccably dressed in a dark blue Italian suit, and Veron the onfield general, with his prompting and precision passes, turned Estudiantes into winners.

The season had already started by the time Lavolpe took charge of Boca following Alfio Basile's reappointment as national team coach after the World Cup. That meant the former Mexico boss had no say in forming the team or preparing them, but he did make some doubtful tactical changes – such as switching to a three-man defence – and clearly failed to communicate effectively with the players.

Lavolpe said he would leave if Boca did not win the title and was true to his word. He was replaced by Velez Sarsfield coach Miguel Russo, whose place was taken by...Lavolpe.

Eric Weil

PERU

Alianza on high at sea level

Opening title winners Alianza Lima took the overall championship after beating closing winners Cienciano 3-2 on aggregate in the play-off. Cienciano striker and league top scorer Miguel Mostto hit the only goal of the first leg, in Cusco. However, back at sea level in Lima, Alianza had little trouble overtaking their opponents with a 3-1 win.

There had been a dramatic end to the closing title race as leaders Coronel Bolognesi lost 2-0 at Universidad San Martin on the final day to allow Cienciano and Universitario, who both won to stay level on points, to go above them. Cienciano beat Melgar 2-1 despite undergoing a 12-hour bus journey over mountain roads to Arequipa after all flights out of Cusco were cancelled due to bad weather. Cienciano then beat Universitario 2-1 in a play-off to win the stage.

Jose Galvez lost on penalties to Sport Boys in a relegation play-off to join Union Huaral in the drop. The two promoted sides are Deportivo Municipal and Arequipa Clean. The latter, who played under the name Total Clean in the season just gone, were formed by a cleaning company only three years ago.

Brian Homewood

CHILE

Colo Colo at the double

Opening title winners Colo Colo completed the double when beating Audax Italiano 6-2 on aggregate in the closing championship Final. The Santiago club, who are run by private company Blanco y Negro, were made bankrupt in 2002 but have bounced back after becoming Chile's first club to offer shares on the stock market.

Colo Colo's success earned midfielder Matias Fernandez a £3.7million move to Villarreal in Spain and made Claudio Borghi one of South America's most sought-after coaches.

Colo Colo had finished only second in their group in the closing regular season but found free-scoring form in the knockout stages, thumping Puerto Montt 5-0 on aggregate in the quarter-finals and Cobreloa 6-3 in the semis before handing Audax their Final thrashing.

Brian Homewood

Flashpoint...Barcelona assistant coach Benitez and LDU's Delgado square up

ECUADOR

Bans after brawl

THE CHAMPIONSHIP play-offs were marred by a ferocious brawl at the end of LDU Quito's final-day 1-1 draw at home to Barcelona that put four visiting players in hospital and earned one-year bans for three from LDU.

The bad feeling evident during the game boiled over at the final whistle, with the players aiming punches and karate kicks at each other. Barcelona's Leonardo Soledispa had his nose broken by a kick while he was on the ground, team-mate David Garcia complained of dizziness after being kicked and punched, Samuel Vanegas suffered an eye injury and Edwin Tenorio a bruised face.

The federation acted with commendable speed and firmness. Three days later, LDU's World Cup striker Agustin Delgado, Peruvian midfielder Roberto Palacios and Paraguayan defender Carlos Espinola were all suspended for 12 months, Jairo Campos for six months, Patricio Urrutia four, and Geovanny Espinoza and Sandro Borja two each. On the Barcelona side, Vanegas, Garcia and Jairon Zamora picked up three-month suspensions, and Tenorio two months.

Delgado said: "I want to apologise to the fans, to all the young people and children for my behaviour. [Barcelona players] treated me badly throughout the game and they kicked the leg they know I have problems with – that's why I reacted the way I did."

Army club El Nacional drew 0-0 at Olmedo to win the title for the second year running and a record 13th time in all. The club, who do not field foreign players, were inspired throughout the campaign by 20-year-old midfielder Cristian Benitez.

Brian Homewood

COLOMBIA

First for Cucuta

CUCUTA WON THE league title for the first time with a 2-1 aggregate defeat of fellow provincial side Deportes Tolima in the closing championship Final. Rodrigo Saraz scored the only goal of the first leg in Cucuta, a city on the Venezuela border. In the return, Julian Anchico put Tolima ahead on the hour but MacNelly Torres equalised 16 minutes later.

Cucuta coach Jorge Luis Pinto was rewarded by being handed the national team reins, replacing Reinaldo Rueda. The priority for Pinto, who coached Costa Rica at the 2004 Copa America, is to take Colombia to the World Cup for the first time since 1998. "We're going to try to build an almost completely new team, because...the generations change, and football brings new players," he said.

Pinto's replacement at Cucuta is Jorge Luis Bernal, previously in charge of Tolima.

Brian Homewood

Sky's the limit...Cucuta celebrate their first championship success

PARAGUAY

Libertad's sweet revenge

Libertad, beaten by Cerro Porteno in the Final of the 2004 and 2005 championship, earned revenge by beating their rivals 2-1 on aggregate in the 2006 edition. After a goalless first leg at Cerro, the closing title winners, Uruguayan striker Hernan Lopez put opening champions Libertad ahead in the return when lobbing keeper Diego Barreto from 35 metres. Sergio Aquino made it 2-0 four minutes later, with Alejandro da Silva clawing one back on the hour.

Cerro had gone into the tie as favourites after going unbeaten during the 20-match closing campaign.

Brian Homewood

URUGUAY

Danubio outdo Penarol

Danubio won the opening championship in dramatic fashion when leapfrogging Penarol after a 4-1 win at their rivals on the final day. Penarol, who had won their previous seven games, needed only a draw and went ahead through Nicolas Vigneri in the 14th minute. However, it all went wrong after veteran captain Paolo Montero limped off. Ignacio Gonzalez and Juan Salgueiro scored for Danubio in an eight-minute spell before half-time, Vigneri missed a penalty, and Gonzalez and Edson Cavani added the other two goals near the end.

Brian Homewood

VENEZUELA

Caracas edge it

Caracas, the 2005-06 closing championship winners, made it back-to-back titles when snatching this season's opening prize from under the noses of UA Maracaibo. The latter led by three points going into the final-day meeting with their rivals in the capital, though they still needed a draw since the sides were level on goal difference. Gabriel Urdaneta put the visitors ahead but Caracas hit back before the break through a Cesar Gonzalez penalty and Edder Perez. Colombian striker Wilson Carpintero's late third ensured victory and the title on goal difference.

Brian Homewood

We do it this way...Bob Bradley gets his message across during his first training session with the United States squad

UNITED STATES

Bradley's provisional licence

THE JOB OF COACHING the national team turned out to be two jobs: the one that candidate Jurgen Klinsmann had in mind, and the one federation president Sunil Gulati envisioned. The two men talked and talked for four months until Gulati could see no way to resolve their differences.

So, on December 8, Gulati made a surprise announcement. Klinsmann, at one time considered a shoo-in, was out of the picture. In came Bob Bradley as interim coach, and he was also put in charge of the Olympic squad.

Bradley is highly experienced in the ways of American soccer. He played at Princeton University, returning there later to coach. He moved on to become the assistant to future national coach Bruce Arena at the University of Virginia, then jumped to the professional game with DC United, again as Arena's assistant. Next came the head coaching job at Chicago Fire, with whom he won both the MLS championship and the Open Cup in his first year. He was less successful during a three-year stint with the New York/New Jersey MetroStars, failing to win anything. He left them a year ago and spent 2006 as coach of Chivas USA.

The "interim" tag is not one that Bradley warms to. He has made it clear that he believes the job is his for the taking, saying: "I have advantages others don't have." He has, in effect, about six months to make his case, for Gulati has said that the final decision will be made in May.

Why May? Think Europe, the end of the season, and a couple of coaches on Gulati's original shopping list – Carlos Queiroz and Gerard Houllier – who may become available.

Until then, Bradley is the man in possession. He has two friendlies (against Denmark on January 20 and Mexico in February) to show his mettle. But the big games for the USA come in June and July: the Gold Cup (June 6-24), then a guest appearance at the Copa America (June 26-July 15).

Even should Bradley be replaced in May, it is inconceivable that he will not have a major influence on the team for those two tournaments. It would seem to make his replacement at that time a sterile move and strongly suggests that he will get the post on a long-term basis.

Bradley's assets are formidable – he is a highly intelligent man and a meticulous worker with a total devotion to the sport. The biggest question mark hanging over him concerns his extremely close relationship with Arena, his predecessor with the national team. Is he just an Arena clone? If so, then Gulati's firing of Arena right after last year's World Cup doesn't make much sense.

Bradley is proud of his friendship with Arena, but insists he is his own man. One clear difference is that Arena has an outgoing personality, where Bradley projects a serious, even dour aura. The hiring of DC United coach Peter Nowak as his assistant – another who does not crack a smile too easily – suggests that the federation will need to spend some money on charm school courses.

Paul Gardner

MEXICO

Home rule as Vergara takes Chivas to the top

GUADALAJARA, the country's most popular club, won their first title under the ownership of flamboyant businessman Jorge Vergara when beating Toluca 3-2 on aggregate in the opening championship Final.

The multi-millionaire, who made his fortune from weight-loss products and nutritional supplements, bought Guadalajara for £70million in 2002 and promised to turn them into the biggest club in Latin America.

At the time, there were fears that he would disfigure "Chivas" and abolish their proud traditions, which include a Mexicans-only policy for the team. Yet Vergara, seen as something of an upstart among the Mexican business establishment – who deplore, among other things, his habit of not wearing socks – has so far proved to be far different from the fly-by-night figures who have taken over clubs elsewhere.

"You can win over the passion of the supporters only when they identify with their players," he once said. "And there are few Mexicans who are suitable for Chivas. To play for us, they have to be very professional, have great talent and commit themselves to stay with Chivas for many years."

Vergara has largely stayed true to those words, both by respecting the Mexican-only policy and encouraging players to sign long-term contracts.

As a consequence, the club have enjoyed an extraordinarily low turnover of players, selling them only when they receive a lucrative offer from Europe, as in the case of defender Carlos Salcido, now at PSV Eindhoven.

This, of course, has helped create stability within the team. But finding the right coach had appeared to be Vergara's Achilles heel. He had hired and fired six of them before stumbling across Jose Manuel De la Torre, assistant to the previous two incumbents, in March.

In the first few months, De la Torre led Guadalajara to the last four of the Libertadores Cup and the 2005-06 closing championship semi-finals, but he has now topped that with the opening title.

The team were not too impressive in the opening regular season, finishing only third in their group and making it into the knockout stages only after beating Veracruz in a play-off. But they then came good, defeating Cruz Azul 4-2 in the quarter-finals and arch-rivals America 2-0 in the semis.

Guadalajara were held 1-1 at home in the first leg of the Final then fell behind to a goal by Toluca's Argentinian striker Bruno Marioni early in the return. However, defender Francisco Rodriguez headed the equaliser just after half-time and striker Adolfo Bautista, ignored by Mexico at the World Cup, fired the winner in the 69th minute.

The title is Guadalajara's first since 1977 but their 11th in all, making them the most successful club in Mexico.

Brian Homewood

Fiesta time...Alberto Medina lifts the trophy as Guadalajara enjoy their opening championship triumph

CENTRAL AMERICA ROUND-UP

Five titles...Enzo Trossero

● Saprissa, owned like Mexican champions Guadalajara by Jorge Vergara, won the first stage of the COSTA RICAN season when beating arch-rivals Alajuelense 4-0 on aggregate in the Final.

● In GUATEMALA, Municipal beat Comunicaciones on away goals in the opening championship Final, their fifth successive title, all under Argentinian coach Enzo Trossero. Municipal were held to a goalless draw at home in the first leg and went behind to a Jorge "The Chinaman" Estrada goal on the half-hour mark of the return. But Marco Acevedo equalised five minutes into the second half and Municipal held on despite having Julio Giron sent off on the hour.

● Underdogs Once Municipal won their first title since 1949, their only success until now, when beating FAS 3-1 after extra-time in the one-off Final of EL SALVADOR'S opening championship. Once looked headed for defeat after having Mario Pablo Quintanilla sent off and then going behind to an own goal from Nelson Nerio in the 70th minute. But Hector Avalos equalised 13 minutes later, before William Torres and Uruguayan Juan Carlos Reyes scored in extra-time.

● Motagua won the HONDURAN opening championship, coming from behind to beat Olimpia 3-1 in the second leg of the Final. The first leg finished scoreless. Motagua are the country's second most successful team with 11 titles, behind Olimpia who have 20.

Brian Homewood

What it's all about...the Asian Cup takes pride of place at the draw in Kuala Lumpur

COMPETITION DRAWS

Easy on the Aussies...

AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN handed a relatively easy draw on their inaugural appearance in the Asian Cup, facing co-hosts Thailand, Iraq and Oman in Group A.

It was just the introduction Socceroos coach Graham Arnold would have wished for as his team avoided an early clash with heavyweights Japan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

"I'm pretty happy with the way it's come out," Arnold said. "This is an important competition, and in terms of the number of people who watch it, it's probably the second or third most popular football tournament in the world.

"The winners go to the Confederations Cup, and there's a lot of prestige involved, so it's very important that we perform well."

Australia's cause has been further boosted by the fact that two potentially tricky opponents for the knockout stages will definitely be eliminated from Group D, the toughest of the four, from which the top two qualify. South Korea, Saudi Arabia and 2004 semi-finalists Bahrain are all potential tournament winners, while Indonesia are generally considered to be the strongest of the four co-hosting nations.

Indonesia coach Peter Withe believes the noisy home support in Jakarta's Senayan stadium could be a crucial factor for his side.

"I said at the Tiger Cup that the Senayan has always brought a fear factor for the opposition," he said. "We're working on getting the fans right behind us, because if that happens then who knows how far we could go."

Group C has also thrown up several intriguing clashes, with Iran joining China, Uzbekistan and co-hosts Malaysia. Iran's place in the draw was confirmed with just days to spare after the lifting of a FIFA ban on their participation in international competition because of government interference in federation matters. The world body had imposed the suspension in November, but agreed to relent following negotiations with the federation, the Asian Football Confederation and the Iranian government's department for sport.

Defending champions Japan were handed a relatively comfortable draw, pooled in Group B with co-hosts Vietnam, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

...but this one's much tougher!

Australia's two Asian Champions League representatives both received tough draws. Inaugural A-League winners Sydney FC were pooled with Japanese champions Urawa Reds, Chinese League runners-up Shanghai Shenhua and Indonesia's Persik Kediri in Group E.

Adelaide United face South Korean champions Songnam Ilhwa, Chinese Double winners Shandong Luneng, and Dong Tam Long An from Vietnam in Group G.

Only the group winners qualify for the quarter-finals, in September, to which defending champions Chonbuk Motors of South Korea receive a bye.

The western half of the draw sees Syria's Al Karama, last season's beaten finalists, heading up Group C, in which they will meet Uzbekistan's Neftchi, Qatari champions Al Sadd and Al Najaf of Iraq.

Al Faisaly of Jordan start out in their bid for a hat-trick of AFC Cup titles – Asia's equivalent of the UEFA Cup – against Lebanon's Al Ansar, Nebitchi from Turkmenistan and Oman's Dhofar Club in Group C. The six group winners plus the two runners-up with the best records will qualify for September's quarter-finals.

Michael Church

AUSTRALIA

Victory take top spot

MELBOURNE VICTORY clinched top spot in the regular season standings with four rounds to spare when beating bottom club New Zealand Knights 4-0 at home. The previous week, Victory's 0-0 home draw with defending champions Sydney FC drew a domestic club record crowd of 50,333 to the Telstra Dome.

Sydney effectively clinched a place in the four-team play-offs by beating Newcastle Jets 2-0 the following week, extending their unbeaten run to nine games.

Adelaide United were on course to take third place, despite spluttering form. They took just four points during Romario's four-game guest stint, but had rarely shown the form that won them last term's regular-season title even before the Brazilian's arrival. They have an ageing squad that, Romario apart, has been reinforced only by Dutch midfielder Bobby Petta, who has had a limited impact.

Central Coast Mariners, Newcastle Jets and Queensland Roar were in the scramble for the last play-off berth.

Paul Moon

On high...Victory's Thompson and Sarkies

Balancing act...Gamba's Myojin battles with Urawa's Horinouchi and skipper Yamada in the Emperor's Cup Final

JAPAN

Reds double up

NEWLY-CROWNED champions Urawa Reds made it a double celebration when beating Gamba Osaka 1-0 in the Emperor's Cup Final on New Year's Day. Yuichiro Nagai scored three minutes from full-time to ensure that Reds retained the trophy and that outgoing coach Guido Buchwald left on a high. "We had our fair share of luck today but I want to pay tribute to the players," said the German, who is returning to his homeland to spend more time with his family. "It's a great way to end three wonderful years."

Buchwald's successor is compatriot Holger Osieck. The 58-year-old is in his second spell at the club, having been in charge in the mid-1990s. Osieck went on to lead the Canadian national team and headed FIFA's technical study group at last year's World Cup.

Reds defender Marcus Tulio Tanaka took the J.League's Player of the Year award. The rugged, Brazil-born stopper also has become a national team regular since being called up by new boss Ivica Osim after the World Cup.

"I am very honoured by the award and also very proud, because I believe it is genuinely harder for a defender than an attacker to win something like this," Tulio said.

But the 25-year-old does have scoring ability as he proved when finishing Reds' top scorer in 2005.

Tulio came to Japan nine years ago as a schoolboy and played for Sanfrecce Hiroshima and Mito Hollyhock before joining Reds in 2004. He obtained Japanese citizenship in 2003 and represented the country at the Olympics the following year.

His call-up by Osim made him the fifth Brazil-born player to appear for the senior Japan team, following Jorge Yonashiro, Ruy Ramos, Wagner Lopes and Alex.

The latter, a club-mate of Tulio, has joined Salzburg, along with Japan's World Cup captain Tsuneyasu Miyamoto, who spent 15 years at Gamba Osaka. Both are on one-year deals, though Alex is only on loan.

Vissel Kobe have returned to the top flight and condemned Avispa Fukuoka to the drop after winning on away goals in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● SAUDI ARABIAN league leaders Al Hilal fired Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro following a run of three games without a win. Internazionale winger and former Portugal captain Luis Figo has signed an 18-month contract with Al Ittihad.

● Former Italy keeper Walter Zenga has been appointed coach of 2003 Asian champions Al Ain in the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. Zenga replaces Romanian Anghel Iordanescu, who stood down in December. Tini Ruijs had been caretaker.

Michael Church

OCEANIA

● NEW ZEALAND champions Auckland City made an amazing comeback from 3-0 down to beat league leaders Waitakere United 4-3 in a bad-tempered derby in which referee Neil Fox sent off three players and showed 19 yellow cards. Auckland had looked drained from their exertions at the Club World Cup in Japan five days earlier and seemed sure to lose when Waitakere scored a third goal midway through the second half. But they rallied magnificently, and Paul Urlovic hit the winner in the ninth minute of stoppage time. Auckland moved up to fourth place, nine points behind Waitakere and with a game in hand. Youngheart Manawatu were second, a point off the pace, largely thanks to the goalscoring exploits of Solomon Islander Benjamin Totori, who hit [illegible] in the first 11 games.

● PAPUA NEW GUIN[illegible] semi-professional [illegible] Soccer League su[illegible] blow to its credi[illegible] inaugural cham[illegible] Petroleum Re[illegible] Souths were [illegible] aggregate [illegible] Moresby [illegible] off to de[illegible] Oceani[illegible] repre[illegible] Islan[illegible] sweet revenge for having been discarded by Souths by [illegible] the winner in each [illegible] 7-1.

RareSoccerVideos.com
Old games from the past
Watch the outstanding players and the best teams
Relive the memories of these great games
vhs-pal, vhs-ntsc, dvd, world wide shipping
www.RareSoccerVideos.com

ROUND-UP

● CAMEROON champions Cotonsport have appointed Frenchman Denis Lavagne as coach.

● Coach Mark Wotte has quit EGYPTIAN club Ismaili after just half a season and with the team top of the League to return to his native Holland. He is replaced by Brazilian Linos. Zamalek fired Manuel Cajuda after a poor run and replaced him with former France coach Henri Michel.

● MOROCCAN champions Wydad Casablanca have signed two Argentinians – midfielder Claudio Ortiz and striker Christian Jeandet.

● In TUNISIA, Swiss coach Michel Decastel has been reappointed by African Champions League runners-up CS Sfaxien.

● Mwana Africa beat Chapungu United 1-0 in ZIMBABWE'S Cup Final, Benjamin Marere scoring seven minutes from time.

● Englishman Eddie May has returned to SOUTH AFRICA after six years away to take charge of struggling Black Leopards.

● Portuguese coach Bernardino Pedroto has left former ANGOLAN champions AS Aviacao after seven years in charge to become technical director at rivals Petro Atletico.

● Veteran French coach Robert Nouzaret has taken charge of GUINEA, replacing compatriot Patrice Neveu. The latter is now in charge of TOGO following the departure of German Otto Pfister.

Mark Gleeson

New man in Guinea...Nouzaret

Taking the low road...FAR's Adil Loutfi slides in to win the ball from Etoile Sahel striker Gilson Silva in the Final's second leg

CONFEDERATION CUP

Army attack mars Etoile's triumph

TUNISIA'S ETOILE SAHEL added the African Confederation Cup to their two Cup-winners Cup triumphs by beating holders Forces Armees Royal Rabat on away goals in the Final. But the second leg in Sousse was marred when the Moroccans attacked the match officials after a late goal that would have given them victory was ruled out for offside.

FAR players man-handled Toko Malebo, the linesman who had flagged, and then turned on referee Daniel Bennett, who was forced to hold up play for five minutes as security guards stepped in to try to defuse the situation.

There was only another minute of play after the game was restarted, and Etoile, who had drawn 1-1 in Morocco in the first leg, managed to keep the return scoreless to clinch the trophy, Africa's second most important club prize.

The Confederation of African Football was expected to punish FAR heavily, but even after a meeting of the emergency committee, there was no word of any sanction. Indeed, FAR were one of four clubs handed a bye to the second round of this year's African Champions League, where they are one of two Moroccan representatives.

CAF's apparent reluctance to take action is in keeping with its habit of turning a blind eye to wanton acts of violence in major games.

In terms of the football, the Final offered little in the way of entertainment but, on balance, Etoile were deserving winners. Their best player, Nigerian striker Emeka Opara, earned a move to Kaiserslautern soon after the win.

Mark Gleeson

Development plans unveiled

FIFA AND THE Confederation of African Football have unveiled their separate plans to develop the game in the continent ahead of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

FIFA's "Win in Africa with Africa" initiative will start with the building of one artificial pitch in 25 countries at a cost of £10million. The eventual aim is for each of the 53 African nations to have a pitch by 2010 in a bid to help improve the standard of the game, which is often played on unsuitable dusty or bumpy surfaces.

CAF's development plans include the building of academies, the creation of myriad courses for coaches, referees and administrators, and the offer of financial assistance for individual associations.

Mark Gleeson

Then there were three...

Sapmi success...the squad hoist the Viva World Cup trophy

A TEAM REPRESENTING the Sami people of Lapland won the inaugural Viva World Cup, held in Hyeres in Provence in November, but the tournament title was a distinct misnomer since only three teams competed.

The VWC, created for non-FIFA-affiliated sides, was originally meant to have 16 teams and was going to be staged in North Cyprus. However, the organisers, the New Federation Board, fell out with the North Cyprus federation, the KTFF, and the event effectively split in two. The NF Board decided to stage its competition in France instead, while the KTFF put on a rival tournament, the ELF Cup, at the same time. Unlike the NF Board, the North Cypriots offered to pay the expenses of visiting teams and managed to lure original VWC contenders such as Greenland.

Only six teams were in the VWC draw in September, and the event was further damaged by the withdrawal of West Papua and a team representing Europe's gypsies. Then, on the eve of the finals, the Southern Cameroon squad – representing the independence-seeking region of the African state – were unable to travel to Provence because of financial difficulties and forfeited each match 3-0. That left only hosts Occitania, a team representing the two million people in the south of France who still speak the medieval language of Oc, an amateur Monaco side and Sapmi (the Sami language word for the Lapland region).

Strongest squad

The latter had by far the strongest squad, with several players from Scandinavian league clubs, including Eric Lamoy of Swedish side Degerfors and two from Norway – Steffen Nystrom of Moss and Tom Hogli, a former Norwegian Under-21 international, of Bodo/Glimt. Also, coach Ivar Morten Normark has spent three years working in the Norwegian top division.

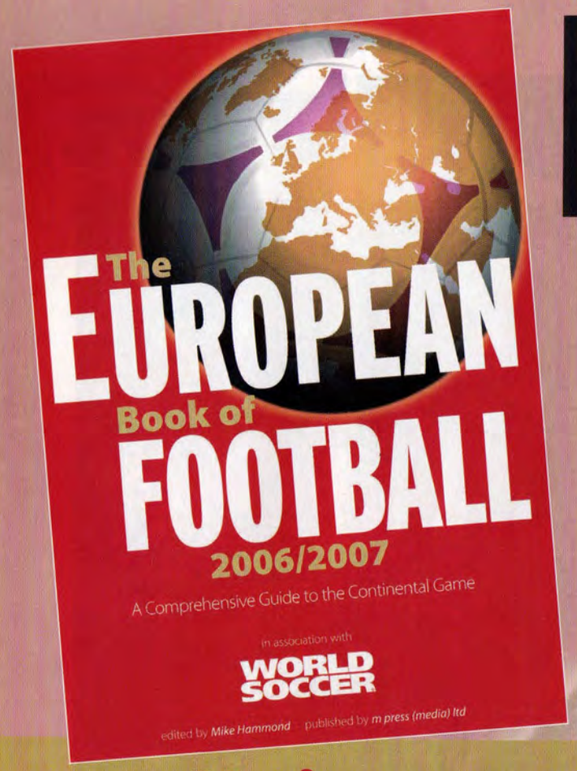
Sapmi beat Occitania 7-0 and then Monaco 14-0 to earn their place in the Final, where they met the Monegasques, 3-2 conquerors of Occitania in the group's other game. Monaco's first tie with Sapmi had been bad-tempered, and the rough tactics of the Principality players in the decider led to them having two men sent off. Sapmi took advantage, running riot to win 21-1.

Normark, who was until recently in charge of Tromso, said: "The standard of the other teams was not so good, and that is a challenge for the NF Board, to find better teams. But the tournament is a great idea. I don't care about politics; the important thing is that people play football and represent themselves."

Despite the withdrawals and funding difficulties, organiser Jean-Luc Kit believes that staging the event at all was an achievement. "The first edition was so difficult to organise but now the VWC exists. All are pioneers in this new competition," said Kit, who, along with NF Board president Christian Michelis, was inspired to hold a world cup for "nations that don't exist" when seeing the Island Games football tournament in Jersey in 1997.

The German region of South Lower Saxony and Lapland are potential venues for a second edition. But given the funding problems, there is some doubt about whether it will be held.

Steve Menary



The EUROPEAN Book of FOOTBALL 2006/2007

A Comprehensive Guide to the Continental Game

in association with WORLD SOCCER

edited by *Mike Hammond* published by *m press (media) ltd*

Unique and Unrivalled!

A whole season of European football recorded and reviewed in exclusive and exhaustive detail.

This reference book takes a look at the complete statistical, narrative and pictorial coverage of all 52 European countries and their top division clubs. Also includes a colour section featuring maps, logos and international kits.

If there is anything you need to know about the continental game then this is the place to look.

A bumper issue covering the World Cup 2006.

Special offer to WORLD SOCCER readers

BUY

The European Book of Football 2006/07

and get the 2005/06 issue for half price - £12.50 (normally £25.00)!

Price £25.00

Postage: UK £4.00 • Europe £5.00 • Rest of world £6.00

To pre-order visit www.calmproductions.com

or call our hotline 0845 408 2606

FASHION

PRO-DIRECT SOCCER www.prodirectsoccer.com

The world's largest online soccer store
www.prodirectsoccer.com

PRO-DIRECT

SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITIONS

adidas +F50 TUNIT INTERNATIONAL COLLECTION

EXCLUSIVE TO PRODIRECTSOCCER.COM

LIMITED NUMBERS IN PROLITE SG, FG OR HG
PLUS COMFORT PACKS FROM £99.99

Each bespoke International boot included in this limited edition collection has only been released in strictly limited numbers and features many unique design aspects, connecting the boots appearance to the chosen national characteristics. These features are found around the heel or within the boot itself.

PURE CLASS

Nike R10 Ronaldinho 'Signature Collection'

This limited edition release breaks new ground in boot design. The R10 'Signature Collection' is the boot of choice of the world's leading player Ronaldinho. The upper is made from a highly polished 'K' leather which gives perfect touch and feel as well as instant comfort and fit.

Nike '10R Signature' Limited Edition
black/pearl Sizes 3.5-13½c N/S
£99.99 SG: PDS 002 009 811 FG: PDS 002 009 810

ALL NEW ADIDAS +F50

This new release features a new tongue system and radical new graphics and are also lighter than previous +F50's. Available in three awesome new colourways plus a new Climacool edition.

AVAILABLE IN PROLITE SG, FG OR HG SOLEPLATES
PLUS COMFORT PACKS FROM £99.99

View all of the above and much more online. Sign up to get our latest catalogues. Pro Personalisation from £19.95

0870 60 80 442

The world's largest online soccer store
www.prodirectsoccer.com

PDS/WS/1206

www.classicfootballshirts.co.uk

www.classicfootballshirts.co.uk

FOOTBALL FLAGS

BARMY FLAGS

CUSTOM FOOTBALL FLAGS MADE TO ORDER

SEE GALLERY ON WWW.BARMYFLAGS.COM
01457 810007 sales@barmyflags.co.uk

PROGRAMMES

PROGRAMME PROMOTIONS

VISIT THE ESSENTIAL WEBSITE FOR PROGRAMME COLLECTORS
www.footballprogrammes.com
which includes an up to date listing of our stock, pre-war to date
No internet access ? No problem!
Clients who have never sent before, forward your name and address to:
P.O. BOX 209, Hounslow, Middx TW3 4DF
For a free copy of our next bi-monthly
MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE
If you have been on our database previously please send 5 x 1st class stamps towards costs.
FOOTBALL PROGRAMME COLLECTIONS ALWAYS WANTED ! (020) 8569 5131

FREE PROGRAMME CATALOGUE

To receive a **FREE** copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match and League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:
STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (WS)
BROAD ST., BUNGAY, SUFFOLK NR35 1AH
or phone **01986 892621** or visit
www.footballprogs.co.uk
(Big Match Programmes also purchased)

COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF PROGRAMMES INCLUDING A GOOD SELECTION OF EUROPEAN
We are always interested in purchasing collectors especially older items.
Please send 50p for our latest catalogue to:
KATH and PETE,
Rundo Football Programmes, 4 Crawford Avenue, Gauldry, Newport-On-Tay, DD6 8SG. Tel: 01382 330356
Peter@rundo.fsbusiness.co.uk www.KathPeterrundo.co.uk

VIDEO/CINE FILMS

Soccer Games on DVD
Maradonna, Ronaldo, Zico, Cruyf, Platini, World Cups, Euro Champs, copa America, Champs League, 2000 games, free list.
Sammi Cheung, Flat 236, Imperial Court, Exchange Street East, Liverpool L2 3EB.
Tel: 07916 364285.
Email: sammi271@btinternet.com

EDUCATION & COURSES

www.RareSoccerVideos.com
Thousands of old games from the past
Watch the outstanding players and the best teams
Pele Maradonna Beckenbauer Cruyff and others
Relive the memories of those great games
vhs-pal, vhs-ntsc, dvd, world wide shipping
www.RareSoccerVideos.com

GOALKEEPERS

GOALKEEPING SUPPLIES DIRECT

FREE personalisation, *FREE* shirt with every pair of gloves ordered

www.goalkeepingsupplies.net
0161 681 3640

PLAY-BY-MAIL

Welcome to the new and improved Play By Mail football management game **Ultimate Europe**. If you're new to PBM or are already a fan then this is the game to be in.

Will you try to buy immediate success by scouring the world for new signings or will you give youth players the chance to turn into the stars of the future Do you have the man management skills to keep your team happy, confident and hungry for glory? Can you achieve the Ultimate goal of winning the European Champions League? With 224 fully update squads available to manage, National team management at no extra charge and a detailed 20+ page report all for just £2.20 per turn, can you afford not to play?

For a free, no obligation Managers Report and Game Guide contact us: Phone / fax 01761 415 251, **www.ultimate-europe.net** or simply return the coupon below to: **Ultimate Europe**, PO Box 2724, Radstock, BA3 2YU. (UK & N. Ireland only)

Name ..... **Tel No** (optional) .....

Address .....

..... **Postcode** .....

I wish to take on the challenge of managing one of the following teams.

1. ..... 2. ..... 3. ..... 4. .....

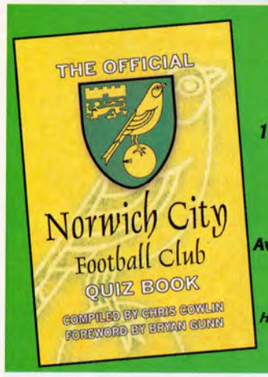
If none of these teams are available I would like to manage a team from the following leagues;

Eng ☐ Ita ☐ Spa ☐ Sco ☐ Fra ☐ Ger ☐ Hol ☐ Por ☐

I wish to lead one of Europe's elite to the heights of domestic and European success. ☐

I want the challenge of leading one of Europe's smaller clubs to fame and glory. ☐

PUBLICATIONS



THE OFFICIAL NORWICH CITY FC QUIZ BOOK

1,000 Questions on the Canaries!

£8.99

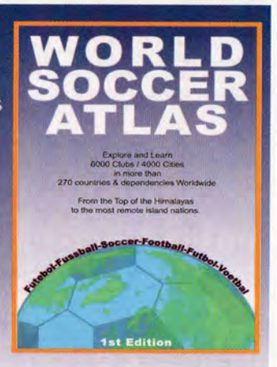
ISBN: 1-904444-80-6
Published by Apex Publishing Ltd
Available Through Norwich City FC Only!

"Reckon you're a Norwich City fan? Do you know your Gunn's from your Huckerby's? Prove yourself with 'The Official Norwich City Football Club Quiz Book'."
- Darren Huckerby

"GET YOURS FOR WORLD CUP 2006!"

- 6,000 CLUBS
- 4,000 CITIES
- 270 COUNTRIES & DEPENDENCIES

New World Soccer Atlas English Version Get Yours At www.soccerexplorers.com



CHRISTMAS GIFTS

eXosports PURE FOOTBALL
www.eXosports.net
0870 3834 116

THE ULTIMATE FOOTBALL SHOP

Football Equipment
Football Merchandise
Football Gifts
Football Tables

EVERYTHING FOOTBALL!

The Viper Football Table

Go online to view the largest range of soccer t-shirts, pin badges, scarves, tracktops, souvenirs + much more...

www.sportingkicks.com

The full range of Italy World Cup Winners merchandise is now in stock including flags, badges, scarves and t-shirts. Go online to view the full range...

Italia Scarf
ONLY £7.99 + p & p

2006 World Cup winners t-shirts in sizes S, M, L, XL & XXL
ONLY £12.99 + p & p

Forza Italia 4 Star Flag
ONLY £9.99 + p & p

Italy 2006 WC Badges
ONLY £4.99 + p & p

For a copy of our free catalogue:
Email: info@sportingkicks.co.uk · Tel: 020 8553 0054

MICELLANEOUS

LIVE4SOCCER.CO.UK

Suppliers of Professional Football Equipment

- Steel Goals
- Aluminium Goals
- PVC Goals
- Goal Accessories
- Pitch Accessories
- Training Equipment
- Medical & Physio Equipment
- Storage Equipment
- All playing equipment:
  Football Strips
  Training & Matchday Footballs
  Shinpads/guards
  Gloves & Bags

For more infomation call
0845 6036225
or visit our website
www.live4soccer.co.uk

TEXT GIRLS IN YOUR AREA
TEXT PLAY TO 85777 NOW
TEXTS : 2 MSG FOR £1.50 TO QUIT SEND STOP TO 85777 CM. LTD CUST SUPPORT 08717120999, PO BOX HP3 9FT. 18+

Private Exchange!
SWITCH MESSAGES OR CHAT LIVE 24-7
ONLY 10P/MIN!
08717 121 922
CALLS COST 10p/MIN PRIVATE EXCHANGE, C.M. LTD PO BOX 206 HP3 9FT

Get MORE GIRLS call the VIBE!
09054 666 900
only 35p min
CM LTD PO BOX 206 HP3 9FT

MEMORABILIA

Get your favourite Football Keychains at www.AlphaZipp.com

ALPHA ZIPP

MEMORABILIA

Forgotten the presents again?

Don't worry. We can deliver in 48 hours.

La Liga Shop for Spanish football shirts
www.laligashop.com

ENAMEL BADGES

Scottish, Irish, Uk, worldwide selection for sale for sale. Send for FREE illustrated catalogue.

T.R. Smith
48 Greyfriars Street, Glasgow, Scotland G32 6RF
Tel: 0141 7783409
or email
badgepins@aol.com

FOOTBALL HEAVEN

For all kinds of football souvenirs & memorabilia

Badges, books, pennants, shirts,videos and **flags and scarves for all 32 2006 World Cup teams in stock.**

Over 500 different football books, many out of print. Over 700 different football videos, many deleted.
Over 2,200 different football badges from around the world and much more.

Flags and badges for World Cup 2006.

www.footballheaven.net
email: info@footballheaven.net
Phone: (44) 01464 821333
Fax: (44) 01464 821330

SOCCER TOURS

soccerdestinations.com
club and select team youth tournaments

FOR SALE

Michael Hewitt Programmes
For our introductory catalogue covering all aspects of football collecting:
PROGRAMMES/MATCH TICKETS/BADGES/MEMORABILIA
just send your full address.
"Overseas: 1st Catalogue free. UK: Send 60p"
LARGE EUROPEAN/WORLD CUP AND INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS.
WE BUY OR EXCHANGE FROM ALL COUNTRIES - CARRIAGE PAID.
All major CREDIT and DEBIT cards accepted.
20 Suzanne Crescent, South Elmsall, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 2BB.
Telephone: 01977 643107
Fax: 01977 648655
E-mail: HEWITTPROG@aol.com

Football Adventures
Join one of our 11 day tours of Argentina and Brazil!
- Attend league matches of famous clubs such as Boca Juniors, River Plate, and Flamengo.
- Opportunities to play social football against local teams.
- Visit the highlights of the region such as Iguazu Falls, Brazilian beaches, and Rio de Janeiro.
- Tour the legendary stadiums of the Maracana and the Bombonera.

www.FootballAdventures.com

FOR SALE

CAPTURE YOUR FAVOURITE SPORTING MOMENTS
QUOTE WSC FOR 10% OFF
visit...
sportsworldpix.com
For all your favourite club merchandise.

FOOTBALL KITS

subside sports
www.subside.co.uk
OFFICIAL FOOTY MERCHANDISE

01. 0607 Barca Home S/S Unicef £39.99
02. 0607 Barca Away S/S Unicef £39.99
03. 0607 Udinese Home S/S £39.99
04. 0607 Palermo Away S/S £39.99
05. 0607 Italy 4-Star Home L/S £44.99
06. 0607 Tibet Home L/S £39.99

TEL: 0845 8382442
WWW.SUBSIDE.CO.UK

THE SECRETS OF BECOMING SUPER-FIT FOR SOCCER AND THE STAR PLAYER OF YOUR TEAM
"This is just Amazing… but I'm twice the player I was… using the same principles as the world's Elite Players.
I'm now delivering the most breathtaking performances like the Richest Players in the game!"
FREE REPORT at www.fitfooty.com

To advertise in WORLD SOCCER please call 020 7261 2823

PUNKFOOTBALL.COM
Classic T-Shirts for real football fans
Bobby Moore Simply The Best £17.99
If you keep playing like that I'll have to pull you off at half time! £17.99
I Could Have Turned Pro £17.99
Sunday Mornings On The Bench £17.99
Secure On-line Ordering
Full Money Back Guarantee
Loads of Exclusive Designs
ORDER NOW FOR XMAS!
Freephone 0800 280 2218
WWW.PUNKFOOTBALL.COM

Pro Soccer PBM
Quick, easy PBM for all ages running since 1989 via post or email. Up to date squads for Britain, Europe and South America.
Send your details for FREE START UP at
www.olympiapbm.co.uk
6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3GS England
Fax: 0115 943 6197

FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST & MOST RESPECTED RESULTS SECTION

WORLD SERVICE

Captain fantastic…keeper Miguel Calero leads the celebrations after Pachuca of Mexico defeat Colo Colo of Chile in the Sudamericana Cup Final

INTERNATIONALS

CECAFA CUP

(Confederation of East and Central African Football Associations)

In Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Group A

Nov 25: Ethiopia 1 Tanzania 2.
Nov 26: Malawi 3 Djibouti 0.
Nov 28: Ethiopia 4 Djibouti 0; Tanzania 2 Malawi 1.
Dec 1: Ethiopia 1 Malawi 0; Tanzania 3 Djibouti 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Ethiopia	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Malawi	3	1	0	2	4	3	3
Djibouti	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

Group B

Nov 26: Burundi 3 Zambia 2.
Nov 29: Burundi 0 Zanzibar 0.
Dec 2: Zambia 4 Zanzibar 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burundi	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Zambia	2	1	0	1	6	3	3
Zanzibar	2	0	1	1	0	4	1

Group C

Nov 27: Rwanda 3 Somalia 0; Uganda 2 Sudan 1.
Nov 30: Rwanda 0 Uganda 1; Sudan 3 Somalia 0.
Dec 3: Rwanda 0 Sudan 0; Uganda 2 Somalia 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Sudan	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Rwanda	3	1	1	1	3	1	4
Somalia	3	0	0	3	0	8	0

Top two in each group and the two third-placed teams with the best record qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

Dec 5
Tanzania 1 (Uzamukunda 26)
Rwanda 2 (Ujenza 41, Witkenge pen 55)
HT: 1-1

Dec 5
Ethiopia 0
Zambia 1 (Sakuwaha 87)
HT: 0-0

Dec 6
Uganda 0
Malawi 0
Aet. Uganda 4-2 on pens

Dec 6
Burundi 0
Sudan 1 (Jaftine pen 94)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0

Semi-finals

Dec 8
Rwanda 0
Zambia 1 (Lwipa 24)
HT: 0-1

Dec 8
Uganda 2 (Kayizzi 16, Sserenkuma 81)
Sudan 2 (Badreldin 1, Aladin 63)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 2-2
Sudan 6-5 on pens

Third-place play-off

Dec 10
Rwanda 0
Uganda 0
Rwanda 4-2 on pens

Final

Dec 10
Zambia 0
Sudan 0
Aet. Zambia 11-10 on pens

CARIBBEAN CUP

Qualifying play-off, 1st leg

Jan 7 - Couva, Trinidad
Haiti 2 (Cadet 8, Lormera 72)
Bermuda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)

Qualifying play-off, 2nd leg

Jan 9 - Couva, Trinidad
Bermuda 0
Haiti 3 (Cadet 25, 90, Boucicaut 63)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Davis (T&T)
Haiti 5-0 on agg

Haiti qualify for final round
(Dominican Republic withdrew from what was going to be a qualifying play-off group)

The Caribbean Cup doubles as the Caribbean qualifying campaign for the 2007 Gold Cup, to be staged in the United States from June 6 to 24. The winners, runners-up and third-placed side in the Caribbean Cup qualify for the Gold Cup finals

KING'S CUP

In Bangkok

Dec 24
Thailand 2 (Sarayoot 36, Datsakorn 61)
Vietnam 1 (Phan Thanh Binh 35)
HT: 1-1

Dec 24
Singapore 0
Kazakhstan 0

Dec 26
Thailand 2 (Kiatisuk 58, 63)
Singapore 0
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Mustafic (Singapore)

Dec 26
Vietnam 2 (Le Hong Minh 21, Le Cong Vinh 90)
Kazakhstan 1 (Sumagambetov 55)
HT: 1-0

Dec 28
Singapore 2 (Bennett 14, Fazrul 62)
Vietnam 3 (Phan Thanh Binh 7, Nguyen Vu Phong 53, Le Cong Vinh 82)
HT: 1-1

Dec 28
Thailand 2 (Suchao 41, Pipat 58)
Kazakhstan 2 (Rodionov 66, Ashirbekov 70)
HT: 1-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Thailand	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Vietnam	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Kazakhstan	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Singapore	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Final

Dec 30
Thailand 3 (Sutee 38, Pipat 43, Suchao 69)
Vietnam 1 (Phan Thanh Binh 68)
HT: 2-0

2009 ARAB NATIONS CUP

1st qualifying round

Group A

In Sana'a, Yemen
Dec 14: Yemen 2 Comoros 0.
Dec 17: Djibouti 2 Comoros 4.
Dec 20: Yemen 4 Djibouti 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Yemen	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Comoros	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Djibouti	2	0	0	2	3	8	0

Palestine withdrew

Group B

In Beirut, Lebanon
Dec 21: Lebanon 0 Mauritania 0; Sudan 6 Somalia 1.
Dec 24: Lebanon 4 Somalia 0; Sudan 2 Mauritania 0.
Dec 27: Lebanon 0 Sudan 0; Somalia 2 Mauritania 8.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sudan	3	2	1	0	8	1	7
Lebanon	3	1	2	0	4	0	5
Mauritania	3	1	1	1	8	4	4
Somalia	3	0	0	3	3	18	0

Group winners enter 2nd qualifying round

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, December 9
Dec 9 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 2 (Khalfan 36, Kaniki 86)
DR Congo 0
HT: 1-0

Sunday, December 10
Dec 10 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mattar pen 90)
Slovakia 2 (Jonas 50, Michalik 53)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ibrahim (Qat)
UAE: Saleem - Fakher, Rahim, M Khamis, Aziz, Jumaa, Khalil (Srour 75), Saeed (Ali Abbas 64), Mattar, S Khamis, Omar (H Ali 75).
Slovakia: Kozacik (Kuciak 46) - Pekarik, Farkas (Michalik 46), Klimpl, Jonas, Ivana, Kopunek (Majernik 65), Sedlak (Zofcak 46), Bicak (Hubocan 83), Sestak (Filo 46), Nemec.

Sunday, January 7
Jan 7 - Singapore
Singapore 4 (Bennett 12, Khairul 29, Indra Daud 59, 71)
Philippines 1 (Younghusband 19)
HT: 2-1

Jan 7 - Sana'a
Yemen 4
Eritrea 1
HT: 0-1

Monday, January 8
Jan 8 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 3 (Al-Montashari 20, Al-Qahtani 31, 50)
Gambia 0
HT: 2-0

Thursday, January 11
Jan 11 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Haqbani 78, Bashir 88)
Syria 1 (Al-Homsi 74)
HT: 0-0

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finland	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Serbia	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Poland	5	3	1	1	6	5	10
Portugal	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Belgium	5	2	1	2	4	2	7
Kazakhstan	5	0	2	3	1	7	2
Armenia	4	0	1	3	0	5	1
Azerbaijan	4	0	1	3	1	8	1

16.08.06 Belgium-Kazakhstan 0-0
02.09.06 Poland-Finland 1-3
02.09.06 Serbia-Azerbaijan 1-0
06.09.06 Armenia-Belgium 0-1
06.09.06 Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan 1-1
06.09.06 Finland-Portugal 1-1
06.09.06 Poland-Serbia 1-1
07.10.06 Armenia-Finland 0-0
07.10.06 Kazakhstan-Poland 0-1
07.10.06 Portugal-Azerbaijan 3-0
07.10.06 Serbia-Belgium 1-0
11.10.06 Belgium-Azerbaijan 3-0
11.10.06 Kazakhstan-Finland 0-2
11.10.06 Poland-Portugal 2-1
11.10.06 Serbia-Armenia 3-0
15.11.06 Belgium-Poland 0-1
15.11.06 Finland-Armenia 1-0
15.11.06 Portugal-Kazakhstan 3-0
24.03.07 Kazakhstan-Serbia
24.03.07 Poland-Azerbaijan
24.03.07 Portugal-Belgium
28.03.07 Azerbaijan-Finland
28.03.07 Poland-Armenia
28.03.07 Serbia-Portugal
02.06.07 Azerbaijan-Poland
02.06.07 Belgium-Portugal
02.06.07 Finland-Serbia
02.06.07 Kazakhstan-Armenia
06.06.07 Armenia-Poland
06.06.07 Finland-Belgium
06.06.07 Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan
22.08.07 Armenia-Portugal
22.08.07 Belgium-Serbia
22.08.07 Finland-Kazakhstan
08.09.07 Azerbaijan-Armenia
08.09.07 Portugal-Poland
08.09.07 Serbia-Finland
12.09.07 Armenia-Azerbaijan
12.09.07 Finland-Poland
12.09.07 Kazakhstan-Belgium
12.09.07 Portugal-Serbia
13.10.07 Armenia-Serbia
13.10.07 Azerbaijan-Portugal
13.10.07 Belgium-Finland
13.10.07 Poland-Kazakhstan
17.10.07 Azerbaijan-Serbia
17.10.07 Belgium-Armenia
17.10.07 Kazakhstan-Portugal
17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	4	3	0	1	9	3	9
France	4	3	0	1	11	2	9
Italy	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Ukraine	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Lithuania	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Georgia	4	1	0	3	9	9	3
Faroe Islands	4	0	0	4	0	18	0

16.08.06 Faroe Islands-Georgia 0-6
02.09.06 Georgia-France 0-3
02.09.06 Italy-Lithuania 1-1
02.09.06 Scotland-Faroe Islands 6-0
06.09.06 France-Italy 3-1
06.09.06 Lithuania-Scotland 1-2
06.09.06 Ukraine-Georgia 3-2
07.10.06 Faroe Islands-Lithuania 0-1
07.10.06 Italy-Ukraine 2-0
07.10.06 Scotland-France 1-0
11.10.06 France-Faroe Islands 5-0
11.10.06 Georgia-Italy 1-3
11.10.06 Ukraine-Scotland 2-0
24.03.07 Faroe Islands-Ukraine
24.03.07 Lithuania-France
24.03.07 Scotland-Georgia
28.03.07 Georgia-Faroe Islands
28.03.07 Italy-Scotland
28.03.07 Ukraine-Lithuania
02.06.07 France-Ukraine
02.06.07 Lithuania-Georgia
02.06.07 Faroe Islands-Italy
06.06.07 Faroe Islands-Scotland
06.06.07 France-Georgia
06.06.07 Lithuania-Italy
08.09.07 Georgia-Ukraine
08.09.07 Italy-France
08.09.07 Scotland-Lithuania
12.09.07 France-Scotland
12.09.07 Lithuania-Faroe Islands
12.09.07 Ukraine-Italy
13.10.07 Faroe Islands-France
13.10.07 Italy-Georgia
13.10.07 Scotland-Ukraine
17.10.07 France-Lithuania
17.10.07 Georgia-Scotland
17.10.07 Ukraine-Faroe Islands
17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Greece	3	3	0	0	6	0	9
Norway	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Bosnia-Herz	4	1	1	2	8	11	4
Malta	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Hungary	4	1	0	3	5	8	3
Moldova	4	0	1	3	2	10	1

02.09.06 Hungary-Norway 1-4
02.09.06 Malta-Bosnia-Herz 2-5
02.09.06 Moldova-Greece 0-1
06.09.06 Bosnia-Herz-Hungary 1-3
06.09.06 Norway-Moldova 2-0
06.09.06 Turkey-Malta 2-0
07.10.06 Greece-Norway 1-0
07.10.06 Hungary-Turkey 0-1
07.10.06 Moldova-Bosnia-Herz 2-2
11.10.06 Bosnia-Herz-Greece 0-4
11.10.06 Malta-Hungary 2-1
11.10.06 Turkey-Moldova 5-0
24.03.07 Greece-Turkey
24.03.07 Moldova-Malta
24.03.07 Norway-Bosnia-Herz
28.03.07 Hungary-Moldova
28.03.07 Malta-Greece
28.03.07 Turkey-Norway
02.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Turkey
02.06.07 Greece-Hungary
02.06.07 Norway-Malta
06.06.07 Greece-Moldova
06.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Malta
06.06.07 Norway-Hungary
08.09.07 Hungary-Bosnia-Herz
08.09.07 Malta-Turkey
08.09.07 Moldova-Norway
12.09.07 Bosnia-Herz-Moldova
12.09.07 Norway-Greece
12.09.07 Turkey-Hungary
13.10.07 Greece-Bosnia-Herz
13.10.07 Hungary-Malta
13.10.07 Moldova-Turkey
17.10.07 Bosnia-Herz-Norway
17.10.07 Malta-Moldova
17.10.07 Turkey-Greece
17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	3	1	0	19	2	10
Czech Rep	4	3	1	0	13	2	10
Slovakia	4	2	0	2	12	9	6
Cyprus	4	1	1	2	8	12	4
Rep Ireland	4	1	1	2	8	7	4
Wales	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
San Marino	3	0	0	3	0	25	0

02.09.06 Czech Republic-Wales 2-1
02.09.06 Germany-Rep Ireland 1-0
02.09.06 Slovakia-Cyprus 6-1
06.09.06 San Marino-Germany 0-13
06.09.06 Slovakia-Czech Republic 0-3
07.10.06 Cyprus-Rep Ireland 5-2
07.10.06 Czech Republic-San Marino 7-0
07.10.06 Wales-Slovakia 1-5
11.10.06 Rep Ireland-Czech Republic 1-1
11.10.06 Slovakia-Germany 1-4
11.10.06 Wales-Cyprus 3-1
15.11.06 Cyprus-Germany 1-1
15.11.06 Rep Ireland-San Marino 5-0
07.02.07 San Marino-Rep Ireland
24.03.07 Cyprus-Slovakia
24.03.07 Czech Republic-Germany
24.03.07 Rep Ireland-Wales
28.03.07 Czech Republic-Cyprus
28.03.07 Rep Ireland-Slovakia
28.03.07 Wales-San Marino
02.06.07 Germany-San Marino
02.06.07 Wales-Czech Republic
06.06.07 Germany-Slovakia
22.08.07 San Marino-Cyprus
08.09.07 San Marino-Czech Republic
08.09.07 Slovakia-Rep Ireland
08.09.07 Wales-Germany
12.09.07 Cyprus-San Marino
12.09.07 Czech Republic-Rep Ireland
12.09.07 Slovakia-Wales
13.10.07 Cyprus-Wales
13.10.07 Rep Ireland-Germany
13.10.07 Slovakia-San Marino
17.10.07 Germany-Czech Republic
17.10.07 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
17.10.07 San Marino-Wales
17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	13	3	10
Russia	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
England	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Macedonia	5	2	1	2	4	3	7
Israel	4	2	1	1	9	6	7
Estonia	3	0	0	3	0	4	0
Andorra	4	0	0	4	1	19	0

16.08.06 Estonia-Macedonia 0-1
02.09.06 England-Andorra 5-0
02.09.06 Estonia-Israel 0-1
06.09.06 Israel-Andorra 4-1
06.09.06 Macedonia-England 0-1
06.09.06 Russia-Croatia 0-0
07.10.06 Croatia-Andorra 7-0
07.10.06 England-Macedonia 0-0
07.10.06 Russia-Israel 1-1
11.10.06 Andorra-Macedonia 0-3
11.10.06 Croatia-England 2-0
11.10.06 Russia-Estonia 2-0
15.11.06 Israel-Croatia 3-4
15.11.06 Macedonia-Russia 0-2
24.03.07 Croatia-Macedonia
24.03.07 Estonia-Russia
24.03.07 Israel-England
28.03.07 Andorra-England
28.03.07 Israel-Estonia
02.06.07 Estonia-Croatia
02.06.07 Macedonia-Israel
02.06.07 Russia-Andorra
06.06.07 Andorra-Israel
06.06.07 Croatia-Russia
06.06.07 Estonia-England
22.08.07 Estonia-Andorra
08.09.07 Croatia-Estonia
08.09.07 England-Israel
08.09.07 Russia-Macedonia
12.09.07 Andorra-Croatia
12.09.07 England-Russia
12.09.07 Macedonia-Estonia
13.10.07 England-Estonia
17.10.07 Croatia-Israel
17.10.07 Macedonia-Andorra
17.10.07 Russia-England
17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	4	4	0	0	8	2	12
Denmark	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
N Ireland	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
Latvia	3	1	0	2	4	2	3
Spain	3	1	0	2	6	5	3
Iceland	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

02.09.06 Latvia-Sweden 0-1
02.09.06 Northern Ireland-Iceland 0-3
02.09.06 Spain-Liechtenstein 4-0
06.09.06 Iceland-Denmark 0-2
06.09.06 Northern Ireland-Spain 3-2
06.09.06 Sweden-Liechtenstein 3-1
07.10.06 Denmark-Northern Ireland 0-0
07.10.06 Latvia-Iceland 4-0
07.10.06 Sweden-Spain 2-0
11.10.06 Iceland-Sweden 1-2
11.10.06 Liechtenstein-Denmark 0-4
11.10.06 Northern Ireland-Latvia 1-0
24.03.07 Liechtenstein-N Ireland
24.03.07 Spain-Denmark
28.03.07 Liechtenstein-Latvia
28.03.07 Northern Ireland-Sweden
28.03.07 Spain-Iceland
02.06.07 Denmark-Sweden
02.06.07 Iceland-Liechtenstein
02.06.07 Latvia-Spain
06.06.07 Latvia-Denmark
06.06.07 Liechtenstein-Spain
06.06.07 Sweden-Iceland
22.08.07 N Ireland-Liechtenstein
08.09.07 Iceland-Spain
08.09.07 Latvia-Northern Ireland
08.09.07 Sweden-Denmark
12.09.07 Denmark-Liechtenstein
12.09.07 Iceland-Northern Ireland
12.09.07 Spain-Latvia
13.10.07 Denmark-Spain
13.10.07 Iceland-Latvia
13.10.07 Liechtenstein-Sweden
17.10.07 Denmark-Latvia

FIFA WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2006

Fabio Cannavaro

Pos		Pts
1	Fabio Cannavaro	498
2	Zinedine Zidane	454
3	Ronaldinho	380
4	Thierry Henry	317
5	Samuel Eto'o	300
6	Didier Drogba	150
7	Kaka	139
8	Gianluigi Buffon	118
9	Andrea Pirlo	86
10	Cristiano Ronaldo	69
11	Michael Ballack	53
12	Steven Gerrard	48
13	Miroslav Klose	46
14	Frank Lampard	31
15	Deco	25
16	Luis Figo	20
17	Franck Ribery	16
	Juan Roman Riquelme	16
	Wayne Rooney	16
20	Gennaro Gattuso	15
21	Andrii Shevchenko	14
22	Michael Essien	13
	Patrick Vieira	13
24	Petr Cech	11
25	Alessandro Nesta	9
26	Lilian Thuram	8
27	Jens Lehmann	6
28	Philipp Lahm	3
29	Adriano	2
30	Tomas Rosicky	0

The coach and captain of every national team were eligible to vote for their top three players from FIFA's shortlist of 30; 165 coaches and 165 captains took part. First choices were awarded 5pts, second choices 3pts and third choices 1pt.

17.10.07 Liechtenstein-Iceland
17.10.07 Sweden-Northern Ireland
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
Bulgaria	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Romania	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Belarus	4	1	1	2	7	10	4
Slovenia	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Albania	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Luxembourg	3	0	0	3	0	4	0

02.09.06 Belarus-Albania 2-2
02.09.06 Luxembourg-Holland 0-1
02.09.06 Romania-Bulgaria 2-2
06.09.06 Albania-Romania 0-2
06.09.06 Bulgaria-Slovenia 3-0
06.09.06 Holland-Belarus 3-0
07.10.06 Bulgaria-Holland 1-1
07.10.06 Romania-Belarus 3-1
07.10.06 Slovenia-Luxembourg 2-0
11.10.06 Belarus-Slovenia 4-2
11.10.06 Holland-Albania 2-1
11.10.06 Luxembourg-Bulgaria 0-1
24.03.07 Albania-Slovenia
24.03.07 Holland-Romania
24.03.07 Luxembourg-Belarus
28.03.07 Bulgaria-Albania
28.03.07 Romania-Luxembourg
28.03.07 Slovenia-Holland
02.06.07 Albania-Luxembourg
02.06.07 Belarus-Bulgaria
02.06.07 Slovenia-Romania
06.06.07 Bulgaria-Belarus
06.06.07 Luxembourg-Albania
06.06.07 Romania-Slovenia
08.09.07 Belarus-Romania
08.09.07 Holland-Bulgaria
08.09.07 Luxembourg-Slovenia
12.09.07 Albania-Holland
12.09.07 Bulgaria-Luxembourg
12.09.07 Slovenia-Belarus
13.10.07 Belarus-Luxembourg
13.10.07 Romania-Holland
13.10.07 Slovenia-Albania
17.10.07 Albania-Bulgaria
17.10.07 Holland-Slovenia
17.10.07 Luxembourg-Romania
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts. Finals tournament: June 7-29, 2008

2007 ASIAN CUP

Finals draw & match schedule

Group A
Australia
Iraq
Oman
Thailand (hosts)

In Bangkok
07.07.07 Thailand v Iraq
08.07.07 Australia v Oman
12.07.07 Oman v Thailand
13.07.07 Iraq v Australia
16.07.07 Thailand v Australia
16.07.07 Oman v Iraq

Group B
Japan
Qatar
United Arab Emirates
Vietnam (hosts)

In Hanoi (except Qatar v UAE)
08.07.07 Vietnam v UAE
09.07.07 Japan v Qatar
12.07.07 Qatar v Vietnam
13.07.07 UAE v Japan
16.07.07 Vietnam v Japan
16.07.07 Qatar v UAE (Ho Chi Minh City)

Group C
China
Iran
Malaysia (hosts)
Uzbekistan

In Kuala Lumpur (except Uzbekistan v China)
10.07.07 Malaysia v China
11.07.07 Iran v Uzbekistan
14.07.07 Uzbekistan v Malaysia
15.07.07 China v Iran
18.07.07 Malaysia v Iran
18.07.07 Uzbekistan v China (Shah Alam)

Group D
Bahrain
Indonesia (hosts)
Saudi Arabia
South Korea

In Jakarta (except Saudi Arabia v Bahrain)
10.07.07 Indonesia v Bahrain
11.07.07 South Korea v Saudi Arabia
14.07.07 Saudi Arabia v Indonesia
15.07.07 Bahrain v South Korea
18.07.07 Saudi Arabia v Bahrain (Palembang)
18.07.07 Indonesia v South Korea

Top two in each group qualify for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals
21.07.07 Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (QF1) (Hanoi)
21.07.07 Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (QF2) (Bangkok)
22.07.07 Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (QF3) (Kuala Lumpur)
22.07.07 Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (QF4) (Jakarta)

Semi-finals
25.07.07 QF2 winners v QF3 winners (Kuala Lumpur)
25.07.07 QF1 winners v QF4 winners (Hanoi)

Third-place play-off
28.07.07 (Palembang)

Final
29.07.07 (Jakarta)

2008 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
Gabon	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Madagascar	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Djibouti withdrew

02.09.06 Gabon-Madagascar 4-0
08.10.06 Ivory Coast-Gabon 5-0
24.03.07 Madagascar-Ivory Coast
02.06.07 Ivory Coast-Madagascar
16.06.07 Madagascar-Gabon
08.09.07 Gabon-Ivory Coast

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Mauritania	2	1	0	1	5	3	3
Burundi	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Botswana	2	0	1	1	0	4	1

02.09.06 Egypt-Burundi 4-1
02.09.06 Mauritania-Botswana 4-0
07.10.06 Botswana-Egypt 0-0
08.10.06 Burundi-Mauritania 3-1
24.03.07 Botswana-Burundi
24.03.07 Egypt-Mauritania
02.06.07 Burundi-Botswana
02.06.07 Mauritania-Egypt
16.06.07 Botswana-Mauritania
16.06.07 Burundi-Egypt
08.09.07 Egypt-Botswana
08.09.07 Mauritania-Burundi

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Uganda	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Niger	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Lesotho	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

02.09.06 Nigeria-Niger 2-0
02.09.06 Uganda-Lesotho 3-0
08.10.06 Lesotho-Nigeria 0-1
08.10.06 Niger-Uganda 0-0
24.03.07 Lesotho-Niger
24.03.07 Nigeria-Uganda
02.06.07 Niger-Lesotho
02.06.07 Uganda-Nigeria
16.06.07 Lesotho-Uganda
16.06.07 Niger-Nigeria
08.09.07 Nigeria-Lesotho
08.09.07 Uganda-Niger

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Sudan	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
Seychelles	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Mauritius	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 Mauritius-Tunisia 0-0
03.09.06 Sudan-Seychelles 3-0
07.10.06 Seychelles-Mauritius 2-1
07.10.06 Tunisia-Sudan 1-0
24.03.07 Mauritius-Sudan
24.03.07 Seychelles-Tunisia
02.06.07 Sudan-Mauritius
02.06.07 Tunisia-Seychelles
16.06.07 Seychelles-Sudan
16.06.07 Tunisia-Mauritius
08.09.07 Mauritius-Seychelles
08.09.07 Sudan-Tunisia

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Liberia	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Eq Guinea	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Rwanda	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

03.09.06 Equatorial Guinea-Liberia 2-1
03.09.06 Rwanda-Cameroon 0-3
07.10.06 Cameroon-Equatorial Guinea 3-0
08.10.06 Liberia-Rwanda 3-2
24.03.07 Cameroon-Liberia
24.03.07 Equatorial Guinea-Rwanda
02.06.07 Liberia-Cameroon
02.06.07 Rwanda-Equatorial Guinea
16.06.07 Cameroon-Rwanda
16.06.07 Liberia-Equatorial Guinea
08.09.07 Equatorial Guinea-Cameroon
08.09.07 Rwanda-Liberia

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Eritrea	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Swaziland	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Kenya	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

02.09.06 Kenya-Eritrea 1-2
03.09.06 Swaziland-Angola 0-2
08.10.06 Angola-Kenya 3-1
08.10.06 Eritrea-Swaziland 0-0
24.03.07 Angola-Eritrea
24.03.07 Kenya-Swaziland
02.06.07 Eritrea-Angola
02.06.07 Swaziland-Kenya
16.06.07 Angola-Swaziland
16.06.07 Eritrea-Kenya
08.09.07 Kenya-Angola
08.09.07 Swaziland-Eritrea

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Senegal	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Burkina Faso	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Mozambique	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

02.09.06 Senegal-Mozambique 2-0
02.09.06 Tanzania-Burkina Faso 2-1
07.10.06 Burkina Faso-Senegal 1-0
08.10.06 Mozambique-Tanzania 0-0
24.03.07 Burkina Faso-Mozambique
24.03.07 Senegal-Tanzania
02.06.07 Mozambique-Burkina Faso
02.06.07 Tanzania-Senegal
16.06.07 Burkina Faso-Tanzania
16.06.07 Mozambique-Senegal
08.09.07 Senegal-Burkina Faso
08.09.07 Tanzania-Mozambique

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Gambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Cape Verde Is	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Guinea	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

03.09.06 Gambia-Cape Verde Islands 2-0
03.09.06 Guinea-Algeria 0-0
07.10.06 Algeria-Gambia 1-0
08.10.06 Cape Verde Islands-Guinea 1-0
24.03.07 Algeria-Cape Verde Islands
24.03.07 Gambia-Guinea
02.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Algeria
02.06.07 Guinea-Gambia
16.06.07 Algeria-Guinea
16.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Gambia
08.09.07 Gambia-Algeria
08.09.07 Guinea-Cape Verde Islands

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Benin	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Togo	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Sierra Leone	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

03.09.06 Sierra Leone-Mali 0-0
03.09.06 Togo-Benin 2-1
08.10.06 Benin-Sierra Leone 2-0
08.10.06 Mali-Togo 1-0
24.03.07 Mali-Benin
24.03.07 Togo-Sierra Leone
02.06.07 Benin-Mali
02.06.07 Sierra Leone-Togo
16.06.07 Benin-Togo
16.06.07 Mali-Sierra Leone
08.09.07 Sierra Leone-Benin
08.09.07 Togo-Mali

Group 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Namibia	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Ethiopia	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Libya	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 DR Congo-Namibia 3-2
03.09.06 Ethiopia-Libya 1-0
07.10.06 Namibia-Ethiopia 1-0
08.10.06 Libya-DR Congo 1-1
24.03.07 DR Congo-Ethiopia
24.03.07 Libya-Namibia
02.06.07 Ethiopia-DR Congo
02.06.07 Namibia-Libya
16.06.07 Libya-Ethiopia
16.06.07 Namibia-DR Congo
08.09.07 DR Congo-Libya
08.09.07 Ethiopia-Namibia

Group 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Congo	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
South Africa	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Zambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Chad	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

02.09.06 South Africa-Congo 0-0
03.09.06 Chad-Zambia 0-2
07.10.06 Congo-Chad 3-0
07.10.06 Zambia-South Africa 0-1
24.03.07 Chad-South Africa
24.03.07 Congo-Zambia
02.06.07 South Africa-Chad
02.06.07 Zambia-Congo
16.06.07 Congo-South Africa
16.06.07 Zambia-Chad
08.09.07 Chad-Congo
08.09.07 South Africa-Zambia

Group 12

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Malawi	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Zimbabwe	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

02.09.06 Morocco-Malawi 2-0
07.10.06 Malawi-Zimbabwe 1-0
24.03.07 Zimbabwe-Morocco
02.06.07 Morocco-Zimbabwe
16.06.07 Malawi-Morocco
08.09.07 Zimbabwe-Malawi

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts. Finals tournament: January 20-February 10, 2008

CLUB FOOTBALL WORLD

CLUB WORLD CUP

In Japan

Quarter-finals

Dec 10 - Toyota
Auckland City (NZ) 0
Al Ahly (Egy) 2 (Flavio 51, Aboutraika 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,912. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)
Auckland: Nicholson - Seaman, Perry, Mulrooney (Hayne 56), Pritchett, Young, Sykes, Jordan (Iwamoto 56), Coombes, Uhlmann, Van Steeden (Sigmund 52).
Ahly: El-Hadary - El-Shater (A Sedik 90), Gomaa, Mohamed, Shadid (Mensah 89), Ashour, Shawky, M Sedik, Flavio, Moteab (Said 84), Aboutraika.

Dec 11 - Tokyo
Chonbuk Motors (SKo) 0
America (Mex) 1 (R Rojas 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 34,197. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Chonbuk: Kwoun Sun-tae - Choi Chul-soon (Kim In-ho 85), Choi Jin-cheul, Kim Young-sun, Kim Hyun-su, Chung Jung-kwan, Wang Jung-hyun (Botti 29), Jeon Kwang-hwan, Ze Carlo, Lim You-hwan (Lee Hyun-seung 83), Kim Hyeung-bum.
America: Ochoa - Castro, O Rojas, Davino, Lopez (Vuoso 86), Cabanas, Blanco, Fabiano Pereira (Mosqueda 71), R Rojas, Villa, Arguello.

Byes to semi-finals:
Internacional (Bra), Barcelona (Spa)

Semi-finals

Dec 13 - Tokyo
Al Ahly 1 (Flavio 54)
Internacional 2 (Alexandre Pato 23, Luiz Adriano 72)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 33,690. **Ref:** Mohd Salleh (Mly)
Ahly: El-Hadary (Abdelhamid 82) - El-Shater (A Sedik 75), Said, El-Nahhas, Gomaa, Mohamed, Ashour, Mostafa (Moteab 46), Shawky, Flavio, Aboutraika.
Internacional: Clemer - Ceara, Indio, Fabiano Eller, Wellington Monteiro, Hidalgo (Rubens Cardoso 63), Alex, Edinho, Fernandao, Iarley (Vargas 82), Alexandre Pato (Luiz Adriano 65).

Dec 14 - Yokohama
America 0
Barcelona 4 (Gudjohnsen 11, Marquez 30, Ronaldinho 65, Deco 85)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 62,316. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
America: Ochoa - Castro, O Rojas, Davino, Lopez (Vuoso 74), Cabanas (Blanco 46), Fabiano Pereira (Mendoza 74), R Rojas, Villa, Arguello, Cuevas.
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta, Puyol, Marquez, Van Bronckhorst, Motta (Xavi 61), Iniesta, Giuly (Belletti 74), Deco, Ronaldinho, Gudjohnsen (Ezquerro 66).

Fifth-place play-off

Dec 15 - Tokyo
Auckland City 0
Chonbuk Motors 3 (Lee Hyun-seung 17, Kim Hyeung-bum 31, Ze Carlo pen 73)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 23,258. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)
Auckland: Nicholson - Seaman, Perry, Mulrooney (Hayne 79), Pritchett, Young (Urlovic 77), Sykes, Jordan, Coombes, Uhlmann, Little (Iwamoto 59).
Chonbuk: Kwoun Sun-tae - Choi Jin-cheul (Shin Sang-hoon 88), Kim Young-sun, Kim Hyun-su (Jeon Kwang-hwan 81), Jang Ji-hyun (Kim Young-sin 76), Chung Jung-kwan, Lee Hyun-seung, Ze Carlo, Lim You-hwan, Kim In-ho, Kim Hyeung-bum.

Third-place play-off

Dec 17 - Yokohama
Al Ahly 2 (Aboutraika 42, 79)
America 1 (Cabanas 59)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,641. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Ahly: Abdelhamid - El-Shater (A Sedik 67), Said, El-Nahhas, Gomaa, Mohamed, Ashour (Mostafa 65), Shawky, Flavio, Moteab (M Sedik 75), Aboutraika.
America: Ochoa - Castro, O Rojas, Davino, Vuoso (Lopez 67), Cabanas, Fabiano Pereira (Blanco 46), Mosqueda, R Rojas (Mendoza 86), Arguello, Cuevas.

Final

Dec 17 - Yokohama
Internacional 1 (Adriano Viera 82)
Barcelona 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 67,128. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Internacional: Clemer - Ceara, Indio, Fabiano Eller, Rubens Cardoso, Edinho, Wellington Monteiro, Alex (Vargas 46), Fernandao (Adriano Viera 76), Alexandre Pato (Luiz Adriano 61), Iarley.
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta (Belletti 46), Puyol, Marquez, Van Bronckhorst, Motta (Xavi 59), Iniesta, Deco, Giuly, Gudjohnsen (Ezquerro 88), Ronaldinho.

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage – final standings

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Barcelona	6	3	2	1	12	4	11
Werder	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Levski	6	0	0	6	1	17	0

Sep 12 Chelsea-Werder Bremen 2-0
Sep 12 Barcelona-Levski Sofia 5-0
Sep 27 Levski Sofia-Chelsea 1-3
Sep 27 Werder Bremen-Barcelona 1-1
Oct 18 Werder Bremen-Levski Sofia 2-0
Oct 18 Chelsea-Barcelona 1-0
Oct 31 Levski Sofia-Werder Bremen 0-3
Oct 31 Barcelona-Chelsea 2-2
Nov 22 Werder Bremen-Chelsea 1-0
Nov 22 Levski Sofia-Barcelona 0-2
Dec 5 Chelsea-Levski Sofia 2-0
Dec 5 Barcelona-Werder Bremen 2-0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	3	3	0	10	3	12
Inter	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Spartak	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Sporting	6	1	2	3	3	6	5

Sep 12 Sporting Lisbon-Internazionale 1-0
Sep 12 Bayern Munich-Spartak Moscow 4-0
Sep 27 Spartak Moscow-Sporting Lisbon 1-1
Sep 27 Internazionale-Bayern Munich 0-2
Oct 18 Internazionale-Spartak Moscow 2-1
Oct 18 Sporting Lisbon-Bayern Munich 0-1
Oct 31 Spartak Moscow-Internazionale 0-1
Oct 31 Bayern Munich-Sporting Lisbon 0-0
Nov 22 Internazionale-Sporting Lisbon 1-0
Nov 22 Spartak Moscow-Bayern Munich 2-2
Dec 5 Sporting Lisbon-Spartak Moscow 1-3
Dec 5 Bayern Munich-Internazionale 1-1

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
PSV	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Bordeaux	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Galatasaray	6	1	1	4	7	12	4

Sep 12 Galatasaray-Bordeaux 0-0
Sep 12 PSV Eindhoven-Liverpool 0-0
Sep 27 Liverpool-Galatasaray 3-2
Sep 27 Bordeaux-PSV Eindhoven 0-1
Oct 18 Bordeaux-Liverpool 0-1
Oct 18 Galatasaray-PSV Eindhoven 1-2
Oct 31 Liverpool-Bordeaux 3-0
Oct 31 PSV Eindhoven-Galatasaray 2-0
Nov 22 Bordeaux-Galatasaray 3-1
Nov 22 Liverpool-PSV Eindhoven 2-0
Dec 5 Galatasaray-Liverpool 3-2
Dec 5 PSV Eindhoven-Bordeaux 1-3

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valencia	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Roma	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Shakhtar	6	1	3	2	6	11	6
Olympiakos	6	0	3	3	6	11	3

Sep 12 Olympiakos-Valencia 2-4
Sep 12 Roma-Shakhtar Donetsk 4-0
Sep 27 Shakhtar Donetsk-Olympiakos 2-2
Sep 27 Valencia-Roma 2-1
Oct 18 Valencia-Shakhtar Donetsk 2-0
Oct 18 Olympiakos-Roma 0-1
Oct 31 Shakhtar Donetsk-Valencia 2-2
Oct 31 Roma-Olympiakos 1-1
Nov 22 Valencia-Olympiakos 2-0
Nov 22 Shakhtar Donetsk-Roma 1-0
Dec 5 Olympiakos-Shakhtar Donetsk 1-1
Dec 5 Roma-Valencia 1-0

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	6	4	2	0	12	3	14
Real Madrid	6	3	2	1	14	8	11
Steaua	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Kyiv Dynamo	6	0	2	4	5	16	2

Sep 13 Kyiv Dynamo-Steaua Bucharest 1-4
Sep 13 Lyon-Real Madrid 2-0
Sep 26 Real Madrid-Kyiv Dynamo 5-1
Sep 26 Steaua Bucharest-Lyon 0-3
Oct 17 Steaua Bucharest-Real Madrid 1-4
Oct 17 Kyiv Dynamo-Lyon 0-3
Nov 1 Real Madrid-Steaua Bucharest 1-0
Nov 1 Lyon-Kyiv Dynamo 1-0
Nov 21 Steaua Bucharest-Kyiv Dynamo 1-1
Nov 21 Real Madrid-Lyon 2-2
Dec 6 Kyiv Dynamo-Real Madrid 2-2
Dec 6 Lyon-Steaua Bucharest 1-1

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	6	4	0	2	10	5	12
Celtic	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Benfica	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Copenhagen	6	2	1	3	5	8	7

Sep 13 Manchester Utd-Celtic 3-2
Sep 13 FC Copenhagen-Benfica 0-0
Sep 26 Benfica-Manchester Utd 0-1
Sep 26 Celtic-FC Copenhagen 1-0
Oct 17 Celtic-Benfica 3-0
Oct 17 Manchester Utd-FC Copenhagen 3-0
Nov 1 Benfica-Celtic 3-0
Nov 1 FC Copenhagen-Manchester Utd 1-0
Nov 21 Celtic-Manchester Utd 1-0
Nov 21 Benfica-FC Copenhagen 3-1
Dec 6 Manchester Utd-Benfica 3-1
Dec 6 FC Copenhagen-Celtic 3-1

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Porto	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
CSKA Moscow	6	2	2	2	4	5	8
Hamburg	6	1	0	5	7	15	3

Sep 13 FC Porto-CSKA Moscow 0-0
Sep 13 Hamburg-Arsenal 1-2
Sep 26 Arsenal-FC Porto 2-0
Sep 26 CSKA Moscow-Hamburg 1-0
Oct 17 CSKA Moscow-Arsenal 1-0
Oct 17 FC Porto-Hamburg 4-1
Nov 1 Arsenal-CSKA Moscow 0-0
Nov 1 Hamburg-FC Porto 1-3
Nov 21 CSKA Moscow-FC Porto 0-2
Nov 21 Arsenal-Hamburg 3-1
Dec 6 FC Porto-Arsenal 0-0
Dec 6 Hamburg-CSKA Moscow 3-2

Group H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Lille	6	2	3	1	8	5	9
AEK	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Anderlecht	6	0	4	2	7	11	4

Sep 13 Anderlecht-Lille 1-1
Sep 13 Milan-AEK Athens 3-0
Sep 26 AEK Athens-Anderlecht 1-1
Sep 26 Lille-Milan 0-0
Oct 17 Lille-AEK Athens 3-1
Oct 17 Anderlecht-Milan 0-1
Nov 1 AEK Athens-Lille 1-0
Nov 1 Milan-Anderlecht 4-1
Nov 21 Lille-Anderlecht 2-2
Nov 21 AEK Athens-Milan 1-0
Dec 6 Anderlecht-AEK Athens 2-2
Dec 6 Milan-Lille 0-2

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides entered UEFA Cup

1st knockout round draw

Barcelona (Spa) v Liverpool (Eng)**
Celtic (Sco) v Milan (Ita)*
Internazionale (Ita) v Valencia (Spa)**
Lille (Fra) v Manchester United (Eng)*
FC Porto (Por) v Chelsea (Eng)**
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) v Arsenal (Eng)*
Real Madrid (Spa) v Bayern Munich (Ger)*
Roma (Ita) v Lyon (Fra)**

**1st legs - Feb 20; 2nd legs - Mar 7*
***1st legs - Feb 21; 2nd legs - Mar 6*

UEFA CUP

Group A
Dec 14: Rangers (Sco) 1 Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 0; Auxerre (Fra) 0 Livorno (Ita) 1.

GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	4	3	1	0	8	4	10
M Haifa (Isr)	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Livorno	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Auxerre	4	1	1	2	7	7	4
Partizan	4	0	1	3	2	7	1

Group B
Dec 14: Tottenham (Eng) 3 Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1; Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 Besiktas (Tur) 1.

GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham	4	4	0	0	9	2	12
Dinamo Buc'st	4	2	1	1	6	6	7
B Leverkusen	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Besiktas	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
C Brugge (Blg)	4	0	2	2	4	7	2

Group C
Dec 14: Sporting Braga (Por) 2 Grasshopper (Swi) 0; Sevilla (Spa) 1 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2.

GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	4	3	1	0	12	5	10
Sevilla	4	2	1	1	7	2	7
Sporting Braga	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
S Liberec (Cze)	4	1	2	1	6	7	5
Grasshopper	4	0	0	4	3	15	0

Group D
Dec 14: Parma (Ita) 0 Osasuna (Spa) 3; Heerenveen (Hol) 1 Lens (Fra) 0.

GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Parma	4	3	0	1	6	6	9
Osasuna	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Lens	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
OB (Den)	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Heerenveen	4	1	1	2	2	4	4

Group E
Dec 13: Blackburn (Eng) 1 Nancy (Fra) 0; Feyenoord (Hol) 3 Wisla Krakow (Pol) 1.

GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blackburn	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Nancy	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Feyenoord	4	1	2	1	4	5	5
Wisla Krakow	4	1	0	3	6	8	3
Basle (Swi)	4	0	2	2	4	9	2

Group F
Dec 13: Espanyol (Spa) 1 Austria Wien (Aut) 0; Zulte-Waregem (Blg) 0 Ajax (Hol) 3.

GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanyol	4	4	0	0	11	2	12
Ajax	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Zulte-Waregem	4	2	0	2	9	11	6
Sparta P (Cze)	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Austria Wien	4	0	0	4	1	9	0

Group G
Dec 13: Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 4 Panathinaikos (Gre) 0; Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 1 Mlada Boleslav (Cze) 1.

Competitive spirit...Parma's Maurizio Ciaramitaro vies with Javad Nekounam of Osasuna in the UEFA Cup

GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	4	2	1	1	3	4	7
Paris SG	4	1	2	1	6	4	5
H Tel Aviv	4	1	2	1	7	7	5
Rapid B (Rom)	4	0	4	0	3	3	4
Mlada Boleslav	4	0	3	1	2	3	3

Group H

Dec 13: Palermo (Ita) 1 Celta Vigo (Spa) 1; Fenerbahce (Tur) 2 Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 2.

GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle (Eng)	4	3	1	0	4	1	10
Celta Vigo	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Fenerbahce	4	1	1	2	5	4	4
Palermo	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
E Frankfurt	4	0	3	1	4	5	3

Top three in each group qualified for 1st knockout round, along with the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

1st knockout round draw

Zulte-Waregem v Newcastle	(1)
Sporting Braga v Parma	(2)
Lens v Panathinaikos	(3)
Bayer Leverkusen v Blackburn	(4)
Hapoel Tel Aviv v Rangers	(5)
Livorno v Espanyol	(6)
Feyenoord v Tottenham	(7)
Fenerbahce v AZ Alkmaar	(8)
Werder Bremen (Ger) v Ajax	(9)
Spartak Moscow (Rus) v Celta Vigo	(10)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) v Maccabi Haifa	(11)
AEK Athens (Gre) v Paris Saint-Germain	(12)
Benfica (Por) v Dinamo Bucharest	(13)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) v Sevilla	(14)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) v Nancy	(15)
Bordeaux (Fra) v Osasuna	(16)

1st legs - Feb 14/15; 2nd legs - Feb 22

2nd knockout round draw

match 1 winners v match 8 winners
match 11 winners v match 6 winners
match 5 winners v match 16 winners
match 2 winners v match 7 winners
match 14 winners v match 15 winners
match 3 winners v match 4 winners
match 12 winners v match 13 winners
match 10 winners v match 9 winners

1st legs - Mar 8; 2nd legs - Mar 15

ROYAL LEAGUE

Group 1

Nov 9: Rosenborg (Nor) 1 Brann (Nor) 3.
Nov 19: Helsingborgs (Swe) 3 Rosenborg 1.
Nov 26: Brann 2 Helsingborgs 2; OB Odense (Den) 5 Rosenborg 3.
Dec 3: Brann 1 OB Odense 1; Rosenborg 0 Helsingborgs 0.
Dec 7: Helsingborgs 1 OB Odense 0; Brann 3 Rosenborg 2.
Dec 10: Helsingborgs 2 Brann 2; Rosenborg 0 OB Odense 1.

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	5	2	3	0	11	8	9
Helsingborgs	5	2	3	0	8	5	9
OB	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Rosenborg	6	0	1	5	7	15	1

Group 2

Nov 18: Hammarby (Swe) 1 Lillestrom (Nor) 1.
Nov 23: Hammarby 2 Brondby (Den) 3.
Nov 26: Lillestrom 2 Hammarby 0.
Nov 30: Brondby 3 Hammarby 1; Lillestrom 1 FC Copenhagen (Den) 0.
Dec 3: FC Copenhagen 0 Lillestrom 1.
Dec 7: Lillestrom 1 Brondby 1.
Dec 10: Brondby 1 Lillestrom 1; Hammarby 1 FC Copenhagen 2.

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lillestrom	6	3	3	0	7	3	12
Brondby	4	2	2	0	8	5	8
Copenhagen	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Hammarby	5	0	1	4	5	11	1

Group 3

Nov 12: Elfsborg (Swe) 4 AIK Stockholm (Swe) 0.
Nov 19: Valerenga (Nor) 2 Elfsborg 1.
Nov 23: Valerenga 1 Viborg (Den) 0.
Nov 26: AIK Stockholm 1 Valerenga 1; Viborg 2 Elfsborg 2.
Nov 30: AIK Stockholm 1 Viborg 1.
Dec 2: Elfsborg 1 Viborg 0.
Dec 3: Valerenga 4 AIK Stockholm 2.
Dec 7: Viborg 2 Valerenga 2; AIK Stockholm 1 Elfsborg 1.
Dec 10: Viborg 1 AIK Stockholm 2; Elfsborg 2 Valerenga 3.

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valerenga	6	4	2	0	13	8	14
Elfsborg	6	2	2	2	11	8	8
AIK	6	1	3	2	7	12	6
Viborg	6	0	3	3	6	9	3

Top two in each group qualify for quarter-finals, plus the two third-placed teams with the best record

ALBANIA

ALBANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SK Tirana	17	11	4	2	36	20	37
Teuta	17	8	7	2	20	12	31
Vllaznia	17	8	5	4	22	16	29
Partizani	17	7	6	4	20	14	27
Elbasani	17	8	2	7	17	17	26
Dinamo	17	7	3	7	19	19	24
Luftetari	17	6	4	7	14	16	22
Flamurtari	17	6	3	8	23	19	21
Kastrioti	17	5	6	6	19	25	21
Besa	17	4	7	6	14	18	19
Shkumbini	17	3	3	11	15	25	12
Apolonia	17	3	2	12	14	32	11

AUSTRIA

Dec 9: Austria Wien 0 Salzburg 2; SV Ried 1 Rapid Wien 2; Grazer AK 2 Pasching 1; Mattersburg 1 Sturm Graz 0.
Dec 10: Altach 2 Wacker Tirol 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	21	13	5	3	44	12	44
Mattersburg	21	10	4	7	30	33	34
Pasching	21	8	7	6	25	23	31
Wacker Tirol	21	7	7	7	22	27	28
Altach	21	8	3	10	31	36	27
SV Ried	21	5	10	6	22	22	25
Grazer AK	21	5	9	7	27	33	24
Rapid Wien	21	5	8	8	27	31	23
Sturm Graz*	21	7	4	10	20	27	22
Austria Wien	21	4	9	8	21	25	21

**3pts deducted for licence application irregularities*

BELGIUM

Friday, December 8

Charleroi 4 (Camus 4, 48, Orlando 42, Oulmers 70)
Genk 1 (Vandooren 76) Att: 12,102

Saturday, December 9

Germinal Beerschot 0
Gent 3 (Foley 10, De Beule 55, Van Dooren og 69) Att: 8,500

Lokeren 0
Zulte-Waregem 2 (Roussel 22, Meert 90) Att: 5,000

Mons 1 (Dahmane 44)
Beveren 0 Att: 3,500

Mouscron 2 (Tomou Bayard 67, Custovic 68)
Lierse 2 (Bueno de Castro 49, Develer 70) Att: 5,400

St Truiden 1 (Buvens 82)
Roeselare 1 (Vanderbiest 87) Att: 6,000

Westerlo 0
Cercle Brugge 0 Att: 4,000

Sunday, December 10

FC Brussels 0
Anderlecht 1 (Tchite 90) Att: 10,500

Club Brugge 4 (Balaban 4, 13, Van Heerden 53, Salou 64)
Standard 4 (De Camargo 57, Fellaini 69, Onyewu 83, Lukunku 90) Att: 26,555

Friday, December 15

Standard 2 (Jovanovic 65, 81)
Mouscron 0 Att: 18,000

Saturday, December 16

Anderlecht 4 (Tchite 14, 83, Frutos 57, Hassan 90)
Mons 1 (Dalmat 28) Att: 24,422

Beveren 1 (Dissa 73)
St Truiden 2 (Simaeys 8, Delorge 10) Att: 3,000

Genk 3 (Vandenbergh 10, Vrancken 68, 90)
FC Brussels 1 (Tehoue 56) Att: 20,495

Gent 2 (Foley 61, Ruiz 76)
Westerlo 0 Att: 8,115

Lierse 1 (Snelders 90)
Lokeren 0 Att: 6,664

Roeselare 1 (De Vleeschauwer 59)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Sterchele 58) Att: 5,100

Sunday, December 17

Cercle Brugge 1 (Boi 63)
Club Brugge 0 Att: 19,093

Zulte-Waregem 1 (Matthijs 24)
Charleroi 0 Att: 5,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Genk	17	12	4	1	38	16	40
Anderlecht	17	11	4	2	33	17	37
Gent	17	10	3	4	29	22	33
Club Brugge	17	9	4	4	35	19	31
Standard	17	9	4	4	32	20	31
Charleroi	17	8	5	4	23	17	29
Westerlo	17	7	4	6	22	22	25
Germinal B	17	6	5	6	20	24	23
Roeselare	17	5	6	6	27	29	21
Zulte-Waregem	17	5	6	6	20	23	21
St Truiden	17	6	2	9	23	26	20
Mouscron	17	4	7	6	23	29	19
Cercle Brugge	17	5	3	9	14	18	18
Beveren	17	4	4	9	15	25	16
Mons	17	4	4	9	14	24	16
FC Brussels	17	3	7	7	16	22	16
Lokeren	17	3	7	7	12	20	16
Lierse	17	1	3	13	10	33	6

LEADING GOALSCORERS

12 Patrick Ogunsoto (Westerlo)
12 Mohammed Tchite (Anderlecht)
11 Bosko Balaban (Club Brugge)
10 Adnan Custovic (Mouscron)
10 Francois Sterchele (Germinal Beerschot)

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sarajevo	15	10	2	3	19	11	32
Zrinjski	15	9	1	5	39	21	28
Siroki Brijeg	15	8	2	5	21	15	26
Orasje	15	7	3	5	23	14	24
Velez	15	7	3	5	24	20	24
Modrica	15	7	3	5	21	17	24
Slavija	15	7	0	8	20	19	21
Borac	15	7	0	8	24	24	21
Zepce	15	6	3	6	17	19	21
Posusje	15	6	2	7	20	24	20
Celik	15	6	2	7	13	17	20
Jedinstvo	15	6	1	8	20	34	19
Zeljeznicar	15	4	5	6	21	20	17
Sloboda	15	5	2	8	17	27	17
Leotar	15	5	1	9	16	25	16
Radnik	15	5	0	10	12	20	15

BULGARIA

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	15	12	3	0	39	2	39
CSKA	15	12	1	2	36	7	37
Lok Sofia	15	10	3	2	31	13	33
Lovech	15	8	5	2	20	12	29
Cherno More	15	7	3	5	24	13	24
Slavia	15	6	5	4	24	19	23
Botev	15	7	1	7	24	24	22
Beroe	15	6	2	7	22	18	20
Vihren	15	6	2	7	15	17	20
Spartak Varna	15	6	1	8	15	30	19
Lok Plovdiv	15	5	3	7	18	19	18
Marek	15	4	4	7	20	30	16
Belasitsa	15	4	3	8	19	22	15
Rilski	15	5	0	10	15	29	15
Rodopa	15	3	1	11	14	26	10
Chernomorets*	15	0	1	14	4	59	-2

**3pts deducted for failing to register enough youth players*

CROATIA

Dec 9: Medimurje 2 Dinamo 3.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	15	2	1	46	14	47
Hajduk	18	14	2	2	32	10	44
Zagreb	18	10	1	7	27	19	31
Sibenik	18	9	3	6	29	22	30
Varteks	18	8	3	7	29	31	27
Medimurje	18	8	1	9	25	29	25
Rijeka	18	7	2	9	29	31	23
Slaven	18	7	2	9	19	23	23
Osijek	18	5	7	6	18	26	22
Pula	18	4	6	8	18	23	18
Cibalia	18	3	2	13	16	33	11
Kamen Ingrad	18	2	1	15	17	44	7

CYPRUS

CYPRUS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	15	10	4	1	34	13	34
Omonia	15	10	3	2	37	11	33
Anorthosis	15	9	3	3	23	13	30
Apollon	15	7	2	6	22	21	23
AEK	15	5	6	4	21	17	21
AEL	15	6	3	6	21	24	21
Ethnikos	15	5	5	5	23	19	20
Nea Salamina	15	4	6	5	18	22	18
ENP	15	4	5	6	16	17	17
Aris	15	5	2	8	21	39	17
AEP	15	2	7	6	14	22	13
Digenis	15	2	7	6	12	24	13
Ayia Napa	15	1	8	6	16	22	11
Olympiakos	15	1	7	7	12	26	10

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	17	10	6	1	20	6	36
Slavia	17	10	4	3	29	15	34
Liberec	17	9	6	2	24	9	33
Mlada Boleslav	17	9	3	5	26	20	30
Jablonec	17	6	7	4	21	18	25
Brno	17	6	7	4	15	16	25
C Budejovice	17	7	4	6	19	22	25
Teplice	17	6	6	5	30	24	24
Ostrava	17	5	6	6	23	23	21
Plzen	17	5	6	6	18	20	21
Most	17	4	7	6	21	24	19
Olomouc	17	5	3	9	17	23	18
Kladno	17	5	3	9	16	27	18
Zlin	17	3	5	9	11	21	14
Pribram	17	2	7	8	11	21	13
Slovacko	17	1	6	10	11	23	9

DENMARK

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen	18	13	4	1	35	12	43
Midtjylland	18	11	4	3	36	20	37
OB	18	10	5	3	24	15	35
AaB	18	9	4	5	23	17	31
Nordsjaelland	18	9	3	6	35	20	30
Esbjerg	18	7	5	6	31	29	26
Brondby	18	6	6	6	24	21	24
Randers	18	6	4	8	24	26	22
Viborg	18	5	3	10	18	35	18
Horsens	18	3	7	8	12	23	16
Vejle	18	2	3	13	19	42	9
Silkeborg	18	2	2	14	15	36	8

ENGLAND

Saturday, December 9
Blackburn 1 (Gamst Pedersen 47)
Newcastle 3 (Martins 31, 90, Taylor 35) Att: 19,225

Bolton 4 (Davies 17, 51, Diouf 77, Anelka 78)
West Ham 0 Att: 22,283

Liverpool 4 (Gerrard 54, Carragher 61, Luis Garcia 66, Gonzalez 90)
Fulham 0 Att: 43,189

Manchester United 3 (Rooney 6, Saha 45, Cristiano Ronaldo 84)
Manchester City 1 (Trabelsi 72) Att: 75,858

Middlesbrough 1 (Aiyegbeni 68)
Wigan 1 (Camara pen 24) Att: 23,638

Portsmouth 2 (Taylor 14, Kanu 27)
Everton 0 Att: 19,528

Tottenham 5 (Berbatov 30, 66, Tainio 33, Malbranque 55, Defoe 63)
Charlton 1 (Dawson og 42) Att: 35,565

Watford 0
Reading 0 Att: 19,223

Sunday, December 10
Chelsea 1 (Essien 84)
Arsenal 1 (Flamini 78) Att: 41,917

Monday, December 11
Sheffield United 2 (A Quinn 50, Webber 64)
Aston Villa 2 (Petrov 2, Baros 65) Att: 30,957

Wednesday, December 13
Chelsea 1 (Drogba 74)
Newcastle 0 Att: 41,945

Wigan 0
Arsenal 1 (Adebayor 89) Att: 15,311

Saturday, December 16
Arsenal 2 (Adebayor 58, Gilberto Silva 60)
Portsmouth 2 (Pamarot 45, Taylor 47) Att: 60,037

Aston Villa 0
Bolton 1 (Speed pen 75) Att: 27,450

Charlton 0
Liverpool 3 (Xabi Alonso pen 3, Bellamy 82, Gerrard 88) Att: 27,111

Newcastle 2 (Martins 49, 85)
Watford 1 (Bouazza 57) Att: 49,231

Reading 1 (Harper 41)
Blackburn 2 (McCarthy 64, Bentley 84) Att: 23,074

Wigan 0
Sheffield United 1 (Hulse 45) Att: 16,322

Sunday, December 17
Everton 2 (Arteta pen 38, Yobo 64)
Chelsea 3 (Howard og 49, Lampard 81, Drogba 87) Att: 33,970

Manchester City 1 (Barton 67)
Tottenham 2 (Davenport 16, Huddlestone 24) Att: 39,825

West Ham 1 (Reo-Coker 75)
Manchester United 0 Att: 34,966

Monday, December 18
Fulham 2 (Helguson pen 12, McBride 35)
Middlesbrough 1 (Viduka 74) Att: 16,891

Saturday, December 23
Arsenal 6 (Gilberto Silva 10, Hleb 23, Adebayor pen 27, Van Persie 85, 88, Flamini 90)
Blackburn 2 (Nonda pen 3, 69) Att: 59,913

Aston Villa 0
Manchester United 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo 58, 85, Scholes 64) Att: 42,551

Fulham 0
West Ham 0 Att: 22,452

Liverpool 2 (Bellamy 47, Xabi Alonso 88)
Watford 0 Att: 42,807

Manchester City 0
Bolton 2 (Anelka 8, 25) Att: 40,157

Middlesbrough 2 (Aiyegbeni 29, Arca 52)
Charlton 0 Att: 32,013

Newcastle 3 (Dyer 3, Martins 7, Parker 34)
Tottenham 1 (Murphy 15) Att: 52,079

Portsmouth 3 (Kozluk og 48, Campbell 54, Pamarot 68)
Sheffield United 1 (Hulse 4) Att: 20,164

Reading 0
Everton 2 (Johnson 14, McFadden 47) Att: 24,053

Wigan 2 (Heskey 45, 75)
Chelsea 3 (Lampard 13, Kalou 30, Robben 90) Att: 22,077

Tuesday, December 26
Blackburn 1 (McCarthy 49)
Liverpool 0 Att: 29,342

Bolton 2 (Ramage og 32, Anelka 57)
Newcastle 1 (Dyer 8) Att: 26,437

Chelsea 2 (Drogba 38, 72)
Reading 2 (Lita 67, Essien og 85) Att: 41,885

Everton 0
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 38,126

Manchester United 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo 47, 51, Solskjaer 59)
Wigan 1 (Baines pen 90) Att: 76,018

Sheffield United 0
Manchester City 1 (Ireland 78) Att: 32,591

Tottenham 2 (Defoe 58, 77)
Aston Villa 1 (Barry 81) Att: 35,293

Watford 1 (Smith 23)
Arsenal 2 (Gilberto Silva 19, Van Persie 83) Att: 19,750

West Ham 1 (Sheringham 81)
Portsmouth 2 (Primus 17, 38) Att: 34,913

Wednesday, December 27
Charlton 2 (Ambrose 19, D Bent 45)
Fulham 2 (McBride 13, Queudrue 90) Att: 25,203

Saturday, December 30
Blackburn 2 (Nonda 9, McCarthy 74)
Middlesbrough 1 (Aiyegbeni pen 61) Att: 22,653

Bolton 3 (Faye 30, Ivan Campo 40, Anelka 62)
Portsmouth 2 (Taylor 2, Cole 89) Att: 22,447

Charlton 2 (D Bent 57, Hughes 90)
Aston Villa 1 (Barry pen 40) Att: 26,699

Chelsea 2 (Rosenior og 35, Drogba 62)
Fulham 2 (Volz 16, Bocanegra 84) Att: 41,926

Everton 3 (Anichebe 9, 58, Neville 62)
Newcastle 0 Att: 38,682

Manchester United 3 (Solskjaer 33, Cristiano Ronaldo 59, 77)
Reading 2 (Sonko 38, Lita 90) Att: 75,910

Sheffield United 1 (Nade 41)
Arsenal 0 Att: 32,068

Tottenham 0
Liverpool 1 (Luis Garcia 45) Att: 36,170

West Ham 0
Manchester City 1 (Beasley 83) Att: 34,574

Monday, January 1
Fulham 0
Watford 0 Att: 19,698

Liverpool 3 (Crouch 61, Gerrard 63, Kuijt 83)
Bolton 0 Att: 41,370

Manchester City 2 (Samaras 50, pen 72)
Everton 1 (Osman 84) Att: 39,836

Middlesbrough 3 (Viduka 36, Aiyegbeni 69, pen 76)
Sheffield United 1 (Jagielka pen 45) Att: 27,963

Newcastle 2 (Milner 33, Edgar 74)
Manchester United 2 (Scholes 40, 46) Att: 52,302

Portsmouth 1 (Mwaruwari 29)
Tottenham 1 (Malbranque 50) Att: 20,194

Reading 6 (Gunnarsson 12, Hunt 15, Ferdinand og 30, Doyle 36, 78, Lita 53)
West Ham 0 Att: 24,073

Wigan 0
Blackburn 3 (Heskey og 37, Derbyshire 58, McCarthy pen 76) Att: 14,864

Tuesday, January 2
Arsenal 4 (Henry pen 30, Hoyte 45, Van Persie pen 76, 90)
Charlton 0 Att: 60,057

Aston Villa 0
Chelsea 0 Att: 41,006

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	22	17	3	2	49	15	54
Chelsea	22	14	6	2	37	17	48
Liverpool	22	12	4	6	32	16	40
Arsenal	22	11	6	5	41	19	39
Bolton	22	12	3	7	27	21	39
Portsmouth	22	10	6	6	33	22	36
Tottenham	22	9	5	8	26	28	32
Everton	22	8	7	7	28	22	31
Reading	22	9	3	10	30	30	30
Man City	22	8	5	9	19	25	29
Blackburn	21	8	4	9	24	29	28
Fulham	22	6	9	7	22	32	27
Aston Villa	22	5	11	6	23	25	26
Newcastle	22	7	5	10	23	28	26
Middlesbrough	22	6	6	10	21	28	24
Sheffield Utd	22	6	5	11	17	29	23
Wigan	21	6	4	11	23	32	22
West Ham	22	5	3	14	12	33	18
Charlton	22	4	4	14	18	40	16
Watford	20	1	9	10	12	26	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
12 Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)
10 Kevin Doyle (Reading)
10 Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)

FA CUP – 3rd round (last 64)

Jan 5: Bristol Rvrs 1 Hereford 0; Stoke 2 Millwall 0.
Jan 6: Birmingham 2 Newcastle 2; Blackpool 4 Aldershot 2; Bristol City 3 Coventry 3; Chelsea 6 Macclesfield 1; Chester 0 Ipswich 0; Crystal Palace 2 Swindon 1; Derby 3 Wrexham 1; Doncaster 0 Bolton 4; Hull 1 Middlesbrough 1; Leicester 2 Fulham 2; Liverpool 1 Arsenal 3; Nottingham Forest 2 Charlton 0; Peterborough 1 Plymouth 1; Portsmouth 2 Wigan 1; Preston 1 Sunderland 0; QPR 2 Luton 2; Sheffield United 0 Swansea 3; Southend 1 Barnsley 1; Tamworth 1 Norwich 4; Torquay 0 Southampton 2; Watford 4 Stockport 1; West Bromwich 3 Leeds 1; West Ham 3 Brighton 0; Wolverhampton 2 Oldham 2.
Jan 7: Cardiff 0 Tottenham 0; Everton 1 Blackburn 4; Manchester United 2 Aston Villa 1; Sheffield Wednesday 1 Manchester City 1.
Jan 9: Barnet 2 Colchester 1; Reading 3 Burnley 2.

FRANCE

Saturday, December 9
Bordeaux 1 (Darcheville 69)
Rennes 2 (Marveaux 11, Utaka 62) Att: 21,929

Lorient 2 (Gignac 23, Saifi 28)
Sedan 0 Att: 11,466

Marseille 2 (Pagis 38, Niang 77)
Monaco 1 (Di Vaio 58) Att: 47,708

Nantes 0
Le Mans 0 Att: 24,357

Nice 0
Nancy 0 Att: 9,421

Toulouse 0
Lens 1 (Jemaa 90) Att: 17,040

Troyes 3 (Lachuer 18, Gigliotti 44, 69)
Auxerre 3 (Jelen 53, 84, Akale 90) Att: 16,891

Valenciennes 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 12,889

Sunday, December 10
Lille 2 (Bodmer 22, Keita 53)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Ilan 8, 67) Att: 14,134

Lyon 3 (Wiltord 45, Cris 87, Malouda 89)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Pauleta 61) Att: 36,072

Saturday, December 16
Le Mans 2 (Basa 31, Romaric 77)
Toulouse 0 Att: 9,470

Monaco 3 (Leko 6, Menez 59, Toure 88)
Sochaux 0 Att: 11,292

Nancy 2 (Gavanon 43, Kim 71)
Marseille 0 Att: 20,081

Nantes 0
Bordeaux 0 Att: 26,490

Rennes 1 (Briand 72)
Troyes 1 (Gigliotti 6) Att: 21,896

Saint-Etienne 3 (Ilan 36, Feindouno 80, Landrin 83)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 27,957

Sedan 2 (Pujol 29, Marin 33)
Lille 0 Att: 12,105

Sunday, December 17
Auxerre 2 (Akale 22, Jelen 54)
Lorient 1 (Gignac 14) Att: 6,049

Lens 0
Lyon 4 (Juninho 23, 62, Malouda 34, Cris 50) Att: 40,038

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Nice 0 Att: 28,341

Friday, December 22
Marseille 2 (Cisse 9, Pagis 64)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Heinz 45) Att: 53,614

Saturday, December 23
Bordeaux 1 (Cid 61)
Le Mans 0 Att: 20,392

Lille 1 (Youla 51)
Auxerre 1 (Akale 55) Att: 14,665

Lorient 0
Rennes 0 Att: 15,618

Lyon 0
Monaco 0 Att: 38,225

Nice 1 (Kone 26)
Lens 2 (Jussie pen 73, Dindane 79) Att: 10,128

Sochaux 2 (Ziani 61, pen 65)
Nancy 1 (Puygrenier 11) Att: 17,700

Toulouse 0
Nantes 4 (Rossi 61, Cetto 68, Oliech 77, Diallo 86) Att: 16,812

Troyes 1 (Ba 74)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Diane 47) Att: 12,046

Valenciennes 2 (Savidan pen 10, Mater 19)
Sedan 1 (Job 69) Att: 13,766

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	19	16	2	1	39	11	50
Lens	19	10	5	4	28	20	35
Sochaux	19	9	6	4	23	20	33
Saint-Etienne	19	9	4	6	31	23	31
Lille	19	8	7	4	27	19	31
Marseille	19	9	3	7	25	19	30
Nancy	19	8	5	6	17	15	29
Bordeaux	19	9	2	8	21	22	29
Rennes	19	6	7	6	16	16	25
Le Mans	19	5	9	5	21	22	24
Lorient	19	6	6	7	19	22	24
Toulouse	18	7	3	8	20	25	24
Auxerre	19	5	8	6	20	24	23
Valenciennes	19	6	3	10	16	28	21
Monaco	19	5	5	9	23	21	20
Paris SG	18	4	7	7	18	24	19
Nantes	19	3	8	8	16	23	17
Troyes	19	3	8	8	20	28	17
Nice	19	3	7	9	15	21	16
Sedan	19	2	7	10	22	34	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Ismael Bangoura (Le Mans)
8 Mathieu Bodmer (Lille)
8 Aruna Dindane (Lens)
8 Mickael Pagis (Marseille)

FRENCH CUP – last 64

Jan 5: Creteil 1 Nice 2 (aet).
Jan 6: Ajaccio GFCO 1 Strasbourg 2; Amiens 3 Grenoble 0; Auxerre 2 Niort 2 (aet; Niort 5-4 on pens); Bordeaux 2 Bastia 0; Calais 2 Lorient 0; Cambrai 1 Marseille 4 (aet); Chatellerault 1 Toulouse 1 (aet; Toulouse 4-3 on pens); Gueugnon 3 Louhans-Cuiseaux 1; Libourne/Saint-Seurin 4 Troyes 2; Lyon-la-Duchere 1 Entente SSG 0; Metz 0 Lille 2; Montpellier 4 Saint-Lo 1; Nancy 3 Lens 3 (aet; Lens 9-8 on pens); Nantes 1 Guingamp 0; Orleans 2 Moulins 1 (aet); Pluvigner 0 Le Mans 3; Pont-de-Cheruy 0 Sedan 1; Pontivy 1 La Vitreenne 0 (aet); Quevilly 0 Monaco 2; Rennes 1 Romorantin 3 (aet); Rodez 3 Angouleme 1 (aet); Saint-Etienne 1 Sochaux 3; Valenciennes 2 Caen 1; Vannes 3 Concarneau 2.
Jan 7: Bayonne 1 Lyon 2; Bois-Guillaume 0 Chateaubriant 1; Clermont Foot 3 Dunkerque 1; Feignies 1 Montceau 2; Jarville 1 Amneville 0; Palaiseau 0 Laon 4; Paris Saint-Germain 3 Nimes 0.

GEORGIA

GEORGIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpi	13	10	2	1	32	5	32
Ameri	13	9	3	1	28	8	30
Zestafoni	13	9	3	1	22	3	30
WiT Georgia	13	9	3	1	30	16	30
Dinamo T	13	9	0	4	24	11	27
Torpedo	13	7	3	3	16	8	24
Sioni Bolnisi	13	7	2	4	19	10	23
Lokomotivi	13	4	2	7	10	17	14
Borjomi	13	3	3	7	15	25	12
Merani	13	3	2	8	9	26	11
Chikhura	13	2	4	7	10	22	10
Dinamo B	13	2	3	8	10	14	9
Dila Gori	13	0	3	10	6	38	3
Kakheti	13	0	1	12	9	37	1

GERMANY

Friday, December 8
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Freier 33, Babic 80)
Hertha 1 (Pantelic 22) Att: 22,500

Saturday, December 9
Bayern Munich 2 (Schweinsteiger 42, Van Buyten 54)
Energie Cottbus 1 (Baumgart 52) Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Russ 4, Kyrgiakos 81)
Werder Bremen 6 (Naldo 3, 31, 48, D Jensen 11, Vranjes 86, Diego 90) Att: 51,400

Hamburg 0
Nurnberg 0 Att: 54,628

Hannover 1 (Brdaric 68)
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Ndjeng 67) Att: 34,107

Monchengladbach 1 (Demirtas og 17)
Mainz 1 (Jovanovic 89) Att: 44,157

Stuttgart 1 (Streller 87)
Bochum 0 Att: 48,000

Sunday, December 10
Schalke 3 (Pander 14, Kuranyi 25, Lovenkrands 47)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Frei 82) Att: 61,482

Wolfsburg 1 (Madlung 50)
Alemannia Aachen 2 (Reghecampf 72, Herzig 77) Att: 19,891

Friday, December 15
Bochum 2 (Gekas 45, Kahe og 85)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 30,500

Saturday, December 16
Alemannia Aachen 3 (Reghecampf pen 63, Fiel 78, Reinhardt og 90)
Hamburg 3 (Berisha 33, Benjamin 67, Ljuboja 76) Att: 20,800

Arminia Bielefeld 0
Schalke 1 (Bajramovic 82) Att: 26,601

Energie Cottbus 0
Stuttgart 0 Att: 13,650

Hertha 1 (Gimenez 63)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 42,549

Mainz 0
Bayern Munich 4 (Salihamidzic 31, Makaay 45, Pizarro 64, Schweinsteiger 66) Att: 20,300

Nurnberg 3 (Banovic 32, Schroth 56, Mnari pen 90)
Hannover 1 (Brdaric 5) Att: 28,683

Sunday, December 17
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Amedick 85)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Voronin 24, Kiessling 74) Att: 66,155

Werder Bremen 2 (D Jensen 17, Naldo 86)
Wolfsburg 1 (Boakye 41) Att: 39,584

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Werder Bremen	17	11	3	3	47	22	36
Schalke	17	11	3	3	29	17	36
Bayern Munich	17	10	3	4	30	19	33
Stuttgart	17	9	5	3	28	19	32
Hertha	17	7	6	4	28	24	27
B Leverkusen	17	7	4	6	28	24	25
Nurnberg	17	4	11	2	21	16	23
A Bielefeld	17	5	7	5	23	19	22
B Dortmund	17	5	7	5	21	21	22
E Frankfurt	17	4	8	5	22	28	20
Hannover	17	5	5	7	16	26	20
Wolfsburg	17	4	7	6	12	16	19
Alemannia	17	5	4	8	28	33	19
Bochum	17	5	3	9	22	30	18
E Cottbus	17	4	5	8	18	24	17
M'gladbach	17	4	3	10	13	23	15
Hamburg	17	1	10	6	16	22	13
Mainz	17	1	8	8	11	30	11

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen)
10 Marko Pantelic (Hertha)
9 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)
8 Diego (Werder Bremen)
8 Mario Gomez (Stuttgart)
7 Theofanis Gekas (Bochum)

GERMAN CUP – last 16

Dec 19: Bochum 1 Stuttgart 4; Eintracht Frankfurt 3 Koln 1 (aet); Nurnberg 0 Unterhaching 0 (aet; Nurnberg 2-1 on pens); Osnabruck 0 Hertha 3.
Dec 20: Alemannia Aachen 4 Bayern Munich 2; Greuther Furth 1 Wolfsburg 3; Hannover 1 Duisburg 0; Kickers Offenbach 2 Wacker Burghausen 1.

GREECE

Dec 9: Ionikos 0 Iraklis 3 (awarded); Panathinaikos 1 Larisa 0.
Dec 10: Ergotelis 1 Kerkira 1; Olympiakos 3 Aigaleo 2; PAOK 0 Atromitos 3; Apollon 1 Aris 1; Panionios 1 OFI 0; Xanthi 0 AEK 0.

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES TEAM OF THE MONTH DECEMBER 2006

La Gazzetta dello Sport · don balon · kicker SPORTMAGAZIN · СПОРТ-ЭКСПРЕСС SPORT-EXPRESS · FOOT MAGAZINE · WORLD SOCCER · A BOLA · voetbal INTERNATIONAL · FANATIK

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Coupet (Lyon); Naldo (Werder Bremen), Materazzi (Inter), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Pepe (Porto); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Juninho (Lyon), Deco (Barcelona), Lampard (Chelsea); Drogba (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona)

FANATIK (Tur)
Lehmann (Arsenal); Rafinha (Schalke), Cris (Lyon), Materazzi (Inter), Zambrotta (Barcelona); Gerrard (Liverpool), Lampard (Chelsea), Daniel Alves (Sevilla); Drogba (Chelsea), Totti (Roma), Klose (Werder Bremen)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)
Coupet (Lyon); Maicon (Inter), Cannavaro (Real Madrid), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Wome (Werder Bremen); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Iniesta (Barcelona), Juninho (Lyon), Stankovic (Inter); Drogba (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona)

SPORT-EXPRESS (Rus)
Van der Sar (Man Utd); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Materazzi (Inter); Essien (Chelsea), Carrick (Man Utd), Diego (Werder Bremen), Stankovic (Inter); Mutu (Fiorentina), Totti (Roma), Kanoute (Sevilla)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Neurer (Schalke); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Cris (Lyon), Burdisso (Inter); Diego (Werder Bremen), Scholes (Man Utd), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Juninho (Lyon); Kanoute (Sevilla), Kanu (Portsmouth), Pepe (Porto)

DON BALON (Spa)
Helton (Porto); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Materazzi (Inter), Naldo (Werder Bremen); Essien (Chelsea), Totti (Roma), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Malouda (Lyon); Kanoute (Sevilla), Drogba (Chelsea), Arveladze (AZ)

FOOT (Blg)
Buffon (Juventus); Panucci (Roma), Van Buyten (Bayern Munich), Cris (Lyon), Zanetti (Inter); Juninho (Lyon), Essien (Chelsea), Vicente (Valencia); Kanoute (Sevilla), Drogba (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona)

KICKER (Ger)
Julio Cesar (Inter); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Naldo (Werder Bremen), Materazzi (Inter), Cris (Lyon); Essien (Chelsea), Juninho (Lyon), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Totti (Roma), Drogba (Chelsea), Kanoute (Sevilla)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (Hol)
Gomes (PSV); Cris (Lyon), Naldo (Werder Bremen), Materazzi (Inter); Essien (Chelsea), Frings (Werder Bremen), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Juninho (Lyon); Mutu (Fiorentina), Drogba (Chelsea), Kanoute (Sevilla)

Dec 16: Iraklis 1 Xanthi 0; Olympiakos 3 Ionikos 0; Atromitos 1 Aris 1.
Dec 17: AEK 4 Panionios 0; OFI 1 PAOK 0; Larisa 0 Apollon 1; Kerkira 3 Panathinaikos 1; Aigaleo 2 Ergotelis 0.
Jan 6: OFI 4 Atromitos 1; PAOK 2 AEK 0.
Jan 7: Panionios 2 Iraklis 1; Panathinaikos 1 Aigaleo 0; Apollon 1 Kerkira 0; Ionikos 1 Ergotelis 3; Aris 1 Larisa 1; Xanthi 0 Olympiakos 0.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	16	13	1	2	32	8	40
AEK	16	10	4	2	31	10	34
Panathinaikos	16	11	1	4	25	15	34
PAOK	16	7	4	5	17	13	25
OFI	16	6	5	5	19	17	23
Xanthi	16	5	5	6	11	10	20
Aris	16	3	10	3	14	15	19
Atromitos	16	4	7	5	19	21	19
Kerkira	16	5	4	7	13	16	19
Aigaleo	16	5	4	7	15	19	19
Panionios	16	4	7	5	12	19	19
Iraklis	16	5	3	8	16	20	18
Apollon	16	4	6	6	13	18	18
Larisa	16	4	5	7	13	23	17
Ergotelis	16	4	4	8	14	18	16
Ionikos*	16	2	2	12	8	30	6

**2pts deducted because of crowd trouble during a home game*

HOLLAND

Friday, December 8
Heerenveen 1 (Tarvajarvi 87)
Roda JC 0 Att: 25,200

Saturday, December 9
Groningen 0
PSV 2 (Afellay 61, Kone 88) Att: 19,254

Heracles 2 (Biseswar 72, Quansah 90)
Sparta 3 (Medunjanin 33, 45, Vlug 57) Att: 8,311

NAC 2 (Stam 36, Zonneveld 66)
Excelsior 1 (Slory 24) Att: 15,125

NEC 2 (Olsson 6, Wisgerhof 47)
Utrecht 0 Att: 12,000

Sunday, December 10
Ajax 2 (Heitinga 35, Huntelaar 75)
AZ 2 (Arveladze 51, Mendes da Silva 57) Att: 50,649

Feyenoord 3 (Hofs 56, De Guzman 59, Haristeas pen 85)
Den Haag 1 (Kolk 90) Att: 39,000

Vitesse 3 (Lazovic 22, Junker 24, Hersi 67)
RKC 1 (Remacle 18) Att: 20,715

Willem II 1 (Bobson 45)
Twente 3 (N'Kufo 31, 42, 67) Att: 12,760

Friday, December 15
PSV 3 (Simons pen 25, Cocu 51, Kluivert 64)
Heracles 0 Att: 33,403

Saturday, December 16
Den Haag 2 (Elia 8, Kolk 20)
Willem II 1 (Kargbo 53) Att: 6,600

Roda JC 2 (Cisse 27, Oper 29)
Vitesse 4 (Lazovic 38, 75, Pryor 49, Benson 90) Att: 13,500

Sparta 0
NAC 3 (Pinas 9, Mtiliga 28, Rigters 45) Att: 10,800

Sunday, December 17
AZ 2 (Luirink 26, Koevermans pen 40)
Groningen 0 Att: 15,493

Excelsior 1 (Pique 90)
Ajax 3 (Huntelaar 24, 48, 74) Att: 3,500

RKC 0
NEC 1 (Denneboom 37) Att: 7,000

Twente 5 (N'Kufo 7, 72, Touma 41, Heubach 57, Bakircioglu 80)
Heerenveen 1 (Afonso Alves 24) Att: 13,250

Utrecht 2 (Van Dijk pen 9, Nelisse 17)
Feyenoord 1 (Vlaar 89) Att: 21,750

Friday, December 22
Heracles 0
Groningen 1 (Lovre 62) Att: 8,221

Saturday, December 23
Feyenoord 3 (Haristeas 17, Lucius pen 29, Vincken 75)
Sparta 2 (Cvetkov 16, Moreno Freire 46) Att: 44,000

Heerenveen 2 (Afonso Alves 24, Nilsson 42)
Excelsior 0 Att: 25,000

NAC 2 (Slot 32, Leonardo 81)
Den Haag 2 (Elia 17, Mols 45) Att: 15,000

PSV 4 (Afellay 4, Kone 16, Simons 22, Diego Tardelli 71)
Willem II 0 Att: 33,100

Sunday, December 24
AZ 0
NEC 0 Att: 15,299

RKC 1 (Fuchs 6)
Utrecht 1 (Caluwe 24) Att: 5,000

Roda JC 2 (Ramzi 2, Van Tornhout 31)
Twente 0 Att: 13,000

Vitesse 4 (Lazovic 49, Junker 51, Benson 89, Hersi 90)
Ajax 2 (Grygera 4, De Mul 35) Att: 24,250

Tuesday, December 26
Feyenoord 1 (Haristeas 38)
PSV 1 (Cocu 24) Att: 45,000

Groningen 0
Sparta 1 (Van Bueren 64) Att: 19,164

Willem II 2 (Imschoot 82, 85)
Excelsior 1 (Slory 11) Att: 11,750

Wednesday, December 27
Ajax 2 (Sneijder 15, Grygera 42)
Roda JC 0 Att: 50,334

Den Haag 1 (Kolk 87)
RKC 1 (Janssen 45) Att: 8,360

NAC 2 (Slot 33, Sikora 89)
Vitesse 1 (Verhaegh 10) Att: 13,520

NEC 0
Heerenveen 2 (Afonso Alves 15, Johnson 82) Att: 12,000

Twente 3 (N'Kufo 30, Bakircioglu 43, Wilkshire 59)
AZ 0 Att: 13,250

Utrecht 0
Heracles 0 Att: 19,500

Friday, December 29
Excelsior 1 (Voskamp 80)
Feyenoord 3 (Buijs 31, Hofs 40, Huysegems 50) Att: 3,527

Saturday, December 30
Heerenveen 0
Utrecht 0 Att: 25,200

NEC 2 (Denneboom 76, Wisgerhof 78)
Ajax 2 (Perez 62, Gabri 80) Att: 12,500

PSV 2 (Kluivert 33, Farfan 48)
Den Haag 1 (Verhoek 78) Att: 32,800

RKC 0
Groningen 2 (Van de Laak pen 25, Nevland 49) Att: 5,000

Sparta 3 (Polak pen 24, Bouaouzan 31, Cvetkov 88)
Twente 0 Att: 9,500

Sunday, December 31
AZ 2 (Opdam 65, Koevermans 84)
Roda JC 2 (Oper 23, 67) Att: 15,042

Heracles 2 (Klavan 36, Everton 40)
Vitesse 2 (Lazovic 8, Benson 71) Att: 8,183

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	20	17	2	1	53	8	53
Ajax	20	13	3	4	47	21	42
AZ	20	12	5	3	54	21	41
Feyenoord	20	12	3	5	41	36	39
Twente	20	11	5	4	43	23	38
Heerenveen	20	10	3	7	34	25	33
Groningen	20	9	3	8	30	36	30
NAC	19	7	5	7	22	29	26
Vitesse	20	8	2	10	36	34	26
Utrecht	20	7	5	8	26	30	26
NEC	20	7	5	8	21	25	26
Roda JC	20	7	5	8	23	28	26
Sparta	20	7	1	12	24	39	22
Heracles	20	4	5	11	17	37	17
Willem II	19	5	1	13	20	46	16
Excelsior	20	4	4	12	27	41	16
Den Haag	20	3	4	13	22	37	13
RKC	20	2	7	11	16	40	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
18 Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
16 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)
14 Danny Koevermans (AZ)
14 Danko Lazovic (Vitesse)
12 Jefferson Farfan (PSV)

HUNGARY

Dec 8: MTK 2 Zalaegerszeg 0; Kaposvar 1 Honved 2.
Dec 10: Fehervar 3 Sopron 1; Debrecen 1 Paks 0; Gyor 0 Ujpest 3; Tatabanya 4 Pecs 0; Diosgyor 1 Rakospalota 0.
Dec 11: Vac 0 Vasas 1.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	17	13	2	2	34	12	41
Debrecen	17	11	3	3	33	13	36
Zalaegerszeg	17	11	2	4	29	20	35
Ujpest	17	9	2	6	23	15	29
Fehervar	17	9	1	7	24	20	28
Diosgyor	17	9	1	7	24	22	28
Vasas	17	8	2	7	16	21	26
Paks	17	6	4	7	16	17	22
Pecs	17	5	6	6	19	25	21
Tatabanya	17	6	2	9	28	29	20
Gyor	17	5	5	7	22	25	20
Sopron	17	6	2	9	15	29	20
Honved	17	5	4	8	23	25	19
Rakospalota	17	4	4	9	21	33	16
Kaposvar	17	4	2	11	16	25	14
Vac	17	1	6	10	12	24	9

ISRAEL

ISRAEL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beitar Jerus'm	15	9	4	2	26	13	31
SC Ashdod	15	9	2	4	25	19	29
H Tel Aviv	15	8	3	4	27	18	27
M Petach Tikva	15	8	3	4	16	11	27
M Tel Aviv	15	6	6	3	20	13	24
M Haifa	15	6	6	3	21	19	24
M Netanya	15	5	6	4	14	12	21
H Kfar Saba	15	4	6	5	20	19	18
Bnei Yehuda	15	3	5	7	15	24	14
M Hertzelia	15	2	5	8	13	25	11
H'kh Amidar	15	1	6	8	11	23	9
H Petach Tikva	15	1	4	10	12	24	7

ITALY

Saturday, December 9
Palermo 3 (Simplicio 2, 79, Amauri 36)
Livorno 0 Att: 20,441

Reggina 2 (Lucarelli 29, Amoruso 78)
Ascoli 1 (Pecorari 84) Att: 11,660

Sunday, December 10
Atalanta 3 (Bombardini 28, Ferreira Pinto 57, Doni 67)
Messina 2 (Cordova 76, Di Napoli 85) Att: 10,804

Cagliari 0
Parma 0 Att: 8,000

Catania 1 (Spinesi 68)
Udinese 0 Att: 18,221

Chievo 0
Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 80) Att: 9,509

Empoli 0
Inter 3 (Crespo 60, Ibrahimovic 78, Samuel 87) Att: 11,471

Lazio 3 (Ledesma 44, Oddo pen 50, Mutarelli 72)
Roma 0 Att: 60,815

Milan 0
Torino 0 Att: 50,422

Sampdoria 0
Siena 0 Att: 17,661

Saturday, December 16
Fiorentina 2 (Mutu pen 20, 76)
Milan 2 (Gilardino 4, 89) Att: 41,578

Udinese 3 (Pinzi 17, Iaquinta 27, Obodo 52)
Cagliari 1 (Cocco 82) Att: 14,079

Sunday, December 17
Ascoli 0
Torino 2 (Rosina pen 59, 90) Att: 7,026

Inter 2 (Materazzi 49, Ibrahimovic 59)
Messina 0 Att: 41,683

Livorno 1 (Lucarelli 65)
Lazio 1 (Pandev 25) Att: 8,641

Parma 2 (Budan 25, Dessena 57)
Chievo 2 (Zanchetta pen 23, D'Anna 67) Att: 13,307

Reggina 0
Sampdoria 1 (Quagliarella 68) Att: 10,738

Roma 4 (Mancini 44, 86, Totti pen 59, 90)
Palermo 0 Att: 40,124

Siena 1 (Frick 85)
Atalanta 1 (Migliacco 36) Att: 6,910

Wednesday, December 20
Atalanta 1 (Tissone 46)
Udinese 2 (De Martino 51, Di Natale 90) Att: 10,481

Cagliari 0
Fiorentina 2 (Toni 32, 75) Att: 7,000

Chievo 3 (Sammarco 26, Cossato 44, Tiribocchi 88)
Reggina 2 (Amoruso 17, Modesto 78) Att: 4,596

Empoli 1 (Marianini 47)
Siena 0 Att: 4,866

Lazio 0
Inter 2 (Cambiasso 39, Materazzi 85) Att: 35,203

Messina 1 (Di Napoli 73)
Parma 1 (Paponi 77) Att: 10,565

Milan 3 (Kaka 4, 88, Gilardino 82)
Catania 0 Att: 41,232

Palermo 4 (Bresciano 15, Corini 53, Tedesco 84, Capuano 90)
Ascoli 0 Att: 19,495

Sampdoria 4 (Franceschini 25, Flachi pen 30, Quagliarella 47, 59)
Livorno 1 (Vigiani 12) Att: 17,506

Torino 1 (Rosina 89)
Roma 2 (Totti 37, Mancini 80) Att: 21,320

Saturday, December 23
Ascoli 3 (Paolucci 8, Bjelanovic 12, 37)
Chievo 0 Att: 7,234

Catania 4 (Spinesi 7, pen 45, 90, Caserta 36)
Sampdoria 2 (Palombo 22, Franceschini 40) Att: 17,467

Fiorentina 4 (Toni 17, Potenza 22, Liverani 45, Mutu 51)
Messina 0 Att: 30,289

Inter 2 (Adriano 65, Loria og 75)
Atalanta 1 (Doni 16) Att: 43,428

Livorno 1 (Lucarelli 61)
Torino 1 (Cioffi 24) Att: 8,116

Parma 1 (Budan 18)
Lazio 3 (Stendardo 30, Pandev 34, Rocchi 45) Att: 14,985

Reggina 4 (Leon 4, Amoruso 8, 27, Bianchi 44)
Empoli 1 (Saudati pen 68) Att: 9,007

Roma 2 (Taddei 5, Mancini 56)
Cagliari 0 Att: 35,122

Siena 1 (Rinaudo 42)
Palermo 1 (Simplicio 41) Att: 7,377

Udinese 0
Milan 3 (Kaka pen 31, Gilardino 35, Ricardo Oliveira 76) Att: 20,140

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	18	15	3	0	38	15	48
Roma	18	13	2	3	40	15	41
Palermo	18	11	2	5	35	23	35
Catania	17	7	5	5	25	31	26
Lazio*	18	8	4	6	29	17	25
Sampdoria	18	6	5	7	28	26	23
Udinese	18	6	5	7	19	21	23
Empoli	17	5	7	5	14	17	22
Livorno	18	5	7	6	18	24	22
Torino	18	5	7	6	14	20	22
Atalanta	18	5	6	7	27	29	21
Milan*	18	7	7	4	22	16	20
Siena*	18	4	9	5	15	19	20
Fiorentina*	18	10	3	5	30	17	18
Cagliari	18	2	10	6	14	21	16
Messina	18	3	6	9	19	32	15
Chievo	18	3	5	10	18	27	14
Reggina*	18	6	5	7	23	25	12
Parma	18	2	6	10	16	33	12
Ascoli	18	1	6	11	13	29	9

**Milan had 8pts deducted, Lazio 3pts, Reggina 11pts and Fiorentina 15pts for their part in the country's match-fixing scandal. Siena had 1pt deducted for late payment of taxes*

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Francesco Totti (Roma)
11 Gionatha Spinesi (Catania)
10 Adrian Mutu (Fiorentina)
9 Rolando Bianchi (Reggina)
9 Fabio Quagliarella (Sampdoria)
9 Christian Rigano (Messina)
9 Luca Toni (Fiorentina)

ITALIAN CUP – last 16

1st legs - Nov 8/9; 2nd legs - Nov 28/29/30/Dec 6/7
Arezzo v Livorno 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Empoli v Genoa 1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Messina v Inter 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5)
Milan v Brescia 4-2, 2-1 (agg 6-3)
Napoli v Parma 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Reggina v Chievo 2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3; Chievo on away goals)
Sampdoria v Palermo 1-0, 3-2 (agg 4-2)
Triestina v Roma 1-2, 0-2 (agg 1-4)

MACEDONIA

MACEDONIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rabotnicki	18	11	4	3	44	18	37
Makedonija	18	10	7	1	38	16	37
Vardar	18	10	4	4	34	19	34
Pobeda	18	8	7	3	31	24	31
Pelister	18	8	1	9	19	16	25
Skendija	18	7	4	7	26	37	25
Baskimi	18	7	3	8	36	29	24
Renova	18	6	6	6	26	22	24
Napredok	18	5	7	6	32	27	22
Sileks	18	6	3	9	26	30	21
Vlazrimi	18	2	3	13	9	38	9
Bregalnica	18	2	3	13	13	58	9

MALTA

MALTA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marsaxlokk	14	12	1	1	34	9	37
Msida St J	14	8	4	2	27	12	28
Valletta	14	8	3	3	31	13	27
Sliema	14	8	3	3	25	16	27
Hibernians	14	7	0	7	26	25	21
Birkirkara	14	6	3	5	23	23	21
Floriana	14	5	4	5	23	17	19
St George's	14	1	4	9	7	27	7
Pieta	14	1	3	10	7	37	6
Marsa	14	0	3	11	7	31	3

MOLDOVA

MOLDOVA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serif	21	16	5	0	44	3	53
Zimbru	21	13	7	1	35	11	46
Nistru	21	10	6	5	27	20	36
Dacia	21	8	11	2	23	14	35
FC Tiraspol	21	8	6	7	28	22	30
Poli Chisinau	21	5	6	10	19	29	21
Iscra-Stali	21	3	9	9	13	29	18
Tiligul	21	2	8	11	12	31	14
Dinamo Bender	21	2	8	11	14	37	14
Olimpia Balti	21	3	4	14	22	41	13

MONTENEGRO

MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Buducnost	17	13	4	0	34	5	43
Zeta*	17	13	2	2	33	11	40
Grbalj	17	6	6	5	16	10	24
Petrovac	17	6	6	5	14	18	24
Rudar	17	7	2	8	17	17	23
Mladost	17	5	6	6	16	22	21
Kom	17	4	7	6	14	13	19
Sutjeska	17	5	4	8	11	15	19
Mogren	17	3	8	6	10	16	17
Berane	17	4	4	9	14	23	16
Decic	17	3	6	8	12	23	15
Jedinstvo	17	2	7	8	13	31	13

**1pt deducted for refusing to play round 4 game*

NORTHERN IRELAND

NORTHERN IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Glentoran	17	12	3	2	52	18	39
Portadown	17	11	4	2	29	14	37
Linfield	16	10	5	1	40	14	35
Cliftonville	17	9	6	2	30	19	33
Crusaders	17	10	1	6	32	27	31
Dungannon	17	9	3	5	24	20	30
Lisburn	17	8	4	5	30	19	28
Coleraine	17	8	3	6	31	30	27
Ballymena	17	6	4	7	25	26	22
Armagh	17	6	1	10	24	43	19
Newry	17	4	5	8	22	27	17
Glenavon	17	4	4	9	24	31	16
Limavady	16	4	4	8	17	30	16
D'gal Celtic	17	2	7	8	16	25	13
Larne	17	2	1	14	15	42	7
Loughgall	17	0	5	12	16	42	5

POLAND

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belchatow	15	9	3	3	31	17	30
Legia	15	8	3	4	29	16	27
Korona	15	8	3	4	24	15	27
Zaglebie	15	7	6	2	20	15	27
Wisla K	15	6	7	2	26	13	25
LKS	15	6	6	3	19	15	24
Lech	15	5	6	4	29	21	21
Cracovia	15	6	3	6	20	25	21
Groclin	15	3	10	2	17	15	19
Arka	15	3	9	3	18	16	18
Widzew	15	4	3	8	16	21	15
Gornik Z	15	4	3	8	18	24	15
Pogon	15	3	5	7	14	19	14
Gornik L	15	3	5	7	9	26	14
Odra	15	2	6	7	13	26	12
Wisla P	15	1	6	8	11	30	9

PORTUGAL

Friday, December 8
Belenenses 2 (Silas 2, Ruben Amorim 76)
Sporting Braga 0

Saturday, December 9
Boavista 3 (Grzelak 14, 44, Linz 51)
Beira Mar 0

Setubal 0
Sporting Lisbon 3 (Liedson 3, 53, Nani 19)

Sunday, December 10
Academica 1 (Gyano 82)
Maritimo 2 (Mbesuma 34, 81)

Aves 0
Uniao Leiria 1 (Sougou 61)

Naval 0
Benfica 0

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Edson 44)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Jaime Junior 30)

Monday, December 11
Nacional 1 (Jose Vitor 38)
FC Porto 2 (Bruno Moraes 75, Gonzalez 89)

Friday, December 15
Maritimo 1 (Lipatin 67)
Belenenses 4 (Silas 8, Jose Pedro 38, pen 63, Eliseu 59)

Saturday, December 16
Benfica 3 (Nuno Gomes 13, Simao 62, Nuno Assis 86)
Setubal 0

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Liedson 26)
Academica 0

Sunday, December 17
Beira Mar 1 (Jardel pen 69)
Nacional 1 (Bruno Amaro 65)

Estrela Amadora 1 (Edu Silva 8)
Aves 0

Naval 2 (Lito 70, Orestes 73)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Paulo Cesar 2)

FC Porto 4 (Pepe 24, 68, Helder Postiga 42, Gonzalez 86)
Pacos Ferreira 0

Monday, December 18
Sporting Braga 2 (Jose Carlos 33, Helder Rosario og 43)
Boavista 2 (Jose Manuel 45, Linz 58)

Thursday, December 21
Benfica 4 (Simao pen 19, Karagounis 43, Fonseca 52, Katsouranis 78)
Belenenses 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	14	12	1	1	32	8	37
Sporting Lisbon	14	10	2	2	22	9	32
Benfica	14	9	2	3	30	13	29
Sporting Braga	14	7	3	4	21	19	24
Maritimo	14	7	1	6	16	17	22
Uniao Leiria	14	6	3	5	13	15	21
Nacional	14	6	2	6	21	16	20
Naval	14	5	5	4	12	12	20
Belenenses	14	6	2	6	15	14	20
Pacos Ferreira	14	4	6	4	14	19	18
Boavista	14	4	4	6	17	19	16
E Amadora	14	4	3	7	9	17	15
Academica	14	3	4	7	18	22	13
Setubal	14	2	3	9	8	22	9
Beira Mar	14	1	5	8	15	30	8
Aves	14	2	2	10	10	21	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Helder Postiga (FC Porto)
7 Roland Linz (Boavista)
6 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
6 Ze Pedro (Belenenses)

ROMANIA

Dec 8: UTA 0 Vaslui 1; Ceahlaul 0 Poli Iasi 4; National 1 Gloria 0.
Dec 9: Jiul 1 Rapid 0; Otelul 0 Farul 0; Poli Timisoara 3 Arges 1.
Dec 10: Pandurii 0 Dinamo 3; Urziceni 0 CFR Cluj 0; U Craiova 0 Steaua 0.

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

GOLDEN SHOE

STANDINGS ON JANUARY 7

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	31	1	31
2	Daniel Nannskog	Stabaek (Nor)	19	1.5	28.5
3	Frederic Kanoute	Sevilla (Spa)	14	2	28
4	Afonso Alves	Heerenveen (Hol)	18	1.5	27
	Veigar Pall Gunnarsson	Stabaek (Nor)	18	1.5	27
	Dmitri Lipartov	Trans Narva (Est)	27	1	27
	Roman Pavlyuchenko	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	18	1.5	27
8	Didier Drogba	Chelsea (Eng)	13	2	26
9	Steffen Iversen	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
10	Aram Hakopyan	Banants (Arm)	25	1	25
	Vjatseslav Zahhovaiko	Flora Tallinn (Est)	25	1	25
12	Cristiano Ronaldo	Manchester United (Eng)	12	2	24
	Diego Milito	Zaragoza (Spa)	12	2	24
	Blaise N'Kufo	Twente (Hol)	16	1.5	24
	Ronaldinho	Barcelona (Spa)	12	2	24
	Francesco Totti	Roma (Ita)	12	2	24
	Alexander Zickler	Salzburg (Aut)	16	1.5	24
18	Nshan Erzrumyan	Kil/Ararat (Arm)	22	1	22
	Gionatha Spinesi	Catania (Ita)	11	2	22
20	Ionel Ganea	Dinamo Bucharest (Rom)	14	1.5	21
	Jo	CSKA Moscow (Rus)	14	1.5	21
	Danny Koevermans	AZ (Hol)	14	1.5	21
	Danko Lazovic	Vitesse (Hol)	14	1.5	21
	Mladen Petric	Basle (Swi)	14	1.5	21
	Anthony Stokes	Falkirk (Sco)	14	1.5	21
	Indrek Zelinski	Levadia Tallinn (Est)	14	1.5	21

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	19	17	1	1	41	10	52
Steaua	19	11	6	2	37	10	39
Rapid	19	10	6	3	33	14	36
CFR Cluj	19	11	3	5	38	24	36
Poli Timisoara	19	9	5	5	20	14	32
Gloria	19	9	3	7	24	19	30
Vaslui	19	8	4	7	25	29	28
Otelul	19	8	3	8	24	32	27
UTA	19	7	3	9	17	20	24
Poli Iasi	19	6	6	7	22	26	24
U Craiova	19	6	6	7	22	33	24
Pandurii	19	6	5	8	15	20	23
Urziceni	19	6	4	9	14	19	22
Farul	19	5	6	8	20	21	21
Ceahlaul	19	5	2	12	13	29	17
Arges	19	4	2	13	13	26	14
Jiul	19	3	5	11	9	24	14
National	19	3	4	12	13	30	13

SCOTLAND

Saturday, December 9
Aberdeen 2 (Mackie 17, Clark 44)
Falkirk 1 (Gow 69) Att: 10,594

Dundee United 3 (Hunt 22, 65, Robertson 78)
Inverness 1 (Wilson 15) Att: 5,294

Hearts 4 (Fissas 9, Quinn og 55, Velicka 58, Bruno Aguiar 64)
Motherwell 1 (Foran 20) Att: 16,753

Kilmarnock 1 (Di Giacomo 54)
St Mirren 1 (Corcoran 75) Att: 5,978

Rangers 3 (Prso 16, Sionko 32, Ferguson 36)
Hibernian 0 Att: 49,702

Sunday, December 10
Dunfermline 1 (Simmons 90)
Celtic 2 (McGeady 49, Zurawski 68) Att: 7,080

Saturday, December 16
Falkirk 2 (Martis og 14, Craig 21)
Hibernian 1 (Fletcher 56) Att: 6,142

Hearts 0
Aberdeen 1 (Lovell 87) Att: 17,274

Inverness 3 (Dods 6, 39, Dargo pen 45)
Kilmarnock 4 (Naismith 29, pen 68, Nish 35, 50) Att: 3,728

Motherwell 2 (Foran pen 62, Reynolds 68)
Dundee United 3 (Samuel 29, McCracken 45, Hunt 79) Att: 4,420

St Mirren 0
Dunfermline 0 Att: 4,246

Sunday, December 17
Rangers 1 (Hemdani 88)
Celtic 1 (Gravesen 38) Att: 50,418

Saturday, December 23
Aberdeen 1 (Lovell 84)
Rangers 2 (Novo 22, Sionko 24) Att: 20,045

Celtic 1 (Gravesen 24)
Falkirk 0 Att: 55,000

Dundee United 0
Hearts 1 (Hartley pen 55) Att: 7,789

Dunfermline 0
Inverness 0 Att: 4,216

Hibernian 5 (Beuzelin 21, Killen 32, Shiels 58, Zemmama 65, Benjelloun 74)
St Mirren 1 (Sutton 41) Att: 13,053

Kilmarnock 1 (Naismith 38)
Motherwell 2 (Foran 15, Paterson 20) Att: 5,576

Tuesday, December 26
Aberdeen 3 (Maguire 6, Nicholson 9, Lovell 87)
Kilmarnock 1 (Naismith 89) Att: 11,887

Celtic 2 (O'Dea 78, Nakamura 80)
Dundee United 2 (Robertson 17, Samuel 58) Att: 57,343

Dunfermline 0
Motherwell 2 (Fitzpatrick 26, McDonald 79) Att: 4,200

Hearts 3 (Hartley 2, Jankauskas 49, Mikoliunas 70)
Hibernian 2 (Killen 55, Shiels pen 61) Att: 17,369

St Mirren 1 (Lappin 67)
Falkirk 0 Att: 5,212

Wednesday, December 27
Inverness 2 (Dods 41, Rankin 90)
Rangers 1 (Novo pen 22) Att: 7,522

Saturday, December 30
Dundee United 3 (Samuel 62, 90, Robson pen 81)
Aberdeen 1 (Severin 56) Att: 12,329

Falkirk 3 (Stokes 33, 37, 45)
Inverness 1 (Rankin 90) Att: 4,516

Hibernian 2 (Killen 63, pen 72)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 14,061

Kilmarnock 0
Hearts 0 Att: 7,302

Motherwell 1 (D Smith 90)
Celtic 1 (Riordan 37) Att: 9,769

Rangers 1 (Boyd 19)
St Mirren 1 (Brittain 14) Att: 50,273

Monday, January 1
Dundee United 1 (Robson 41)
Falkirk 5 (Cregg pen 17, O'Donnell 45, Gow 63, 76, 89) Att: 6,261

Inverness 2 (Bayne 5, Wyness 22)
St Mirren 1 (Broadfoot 77) Att: 4,246

Tuesday, January 2
Celtic 2 (O'Dea 39, McGeady 90)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 57,236

Dunfermline 0
Hearts 1 (Pospisil 16) Att: 7,004

Hibernian 0
Aberdeen 0 Att: 16,278

Motherwell 0
Rangers 1 (Boyd pen 70) Att: 10,338

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	23	17	5	1	43	17	56
Rangers	23	11	6	6	35	22	39
Aberdeen	23	11	5	7	30	21	38
Hearts	23	10	7	6	32	22	37
Hibernian	23	9	6	8	42	28	33
Falkirk	23	9	3	11	32	30	30
Kilmarnock	23	8	6	9	31	38	30
Inverness	23	6	9	8	25	32	27
Dundee Utd	23	7	6	10	28	42	27
Motherwell	23	7	4	12	29	39	25
St Mirren	23	5	8	10	21	32	23
Dunfermline	23	3	5	15	13	38	14

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Anthony Stokes (Falkirk)
13 Chris Killen (Hibernian)
9 Kris Boyd (Rangers)
9 Scott McDonald (Motherwell)
9 John Sutton (St Mirren)

SCOTTISH CUP – last 32

Jan 6: Airdrie 0 Motherwell 1; Berwick 0 Falkirk 2; Celtic 4 Dumbarton 0; Clyde 0 Gretna 3; Cowdenbeath 1 Brechin 1; Deveronvale 5 Elgin 4; Dundee 1 Queen of the South 1; Hamilton 2 Livingston 4; Morton 3 Kilmarnock 1; Ross County 0 Partick 1; St Johnstone 0 Ayr 0; Stirling 1 Inverness 6; Stranraer 0 Hearts 4.
Jan 7: Dunfermline 3 Rangers 2.
Jan 10: Aberdeen 2 Hibernian 2.

Still to play: Dundee United v St Mirren

SERBIA

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	16	13	2	1	27	7	41
Mladost	16	8	5	3	16	8	29
OFK	16	7	7	2	21	9	28
Partizan	16	8	3	5	22	15	27
Bezanija	16	5	9	2	19	13	24
Vojvodina	16	6	3	7	12	14	21
Banat	16	5	4	7	13	19	19
Hajduk K	16	6	1	9	11	18	19
Smederevo	16	4	6	6	12	16	18
Vozdovac	16	4	5	7	13	20	17
Borac	16	4	4	8	8	13	16
Zemun	16	0	3	13	5	27	3

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	22	16	4	2	53	13	52
Artmedia	22	13	3	6	40	28	42
Kosice	22	10	4	8	29	29	34
Ruzomberok	22	8	7	7	26	18	31
Banska B'trica	22	8	7	7	24	26	31
Senec	22	9	4	9	22	30	31
Nitra	22	9	3	10	16	21	30
Slovan	22	7	5	10	24	32	26
Inter	22	6	7	9	25	25	25
Dubnica	22	6	7	9	24	35	25
Spartak	22	6	6	10	22	33	24
Trencin	22	3	5	14	18	33	14

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Domzale	20	13	7	0	38	16	46
Maribor	20	8	8	4	34	24	32
Primorje	20	9	5	6	28	22	32
Gorica	20	8	7	5	31	26	31
Drava	20	7	7	6	31	27	28
Nafta	20	7	6	7	27	30	27
Koper	20	2	13	5	24	27	19
Publikum	20	4	7	9	27	33	19
Bela Krajina	20	2	8	10	21	36	14
Factor	20	2	8	10	20	40	14

SPAIN

Saturday, December 9
Barcelona 1 (Ronaldinho 60)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 69,093

Sevilla 2 (Kanoute 16, Chevanton 76)
Real Madrid 1 (Beckham 12) Att: 45,500

Sunday, December 10
Athletic Bilbao 4 (Urzaiz 26, 40, Garmendia 59, Sarriegi 87)
Recreativo 2 (Bautista 5, Uche 54) Att: 36,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Fernando Torres 55)
Espanyol 2 (Tamudo 7, Luis Garcia 61) Att: 45,000

Celta Vigo 1 (Fernando Baiano 16)
Villarreal 1 (Forlan 63) Att: 12,000

Getafe 1 (Guiza 49)
Betis 1 (Juanito 85) Att: 9,000

Gimnastic 2 (David Garcia 40, Ruben Castro 75)
Levante 1 (Riga Mustapha 27) Att: 12,000

Osasuna 3 (Milosevic 59, Javier Flano 67, Punal pen 79)
Mallorca 0 Att: 15,873

Racing Santander 0
Zaragoza 2 (D Milito 59, Lafita 79) Att: 14,742

Valencia 4 (Angulo 9, Villa pen 38, 74, Vicente 90)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 40,000

Saturday, December 16
Deportivo La Coruna 0
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Javi Martinez 8, 90) Att: 12,000

Mallorca 1 (Jankovic 16)
Racing Santander 2 (Ruben Gonzalez 63, Balboa 89) Att: 12,000

Zaragoza 0
Valencia 1 (Angulo 42) Att: 22,000

Sunday, December 17
Atletico Madrid 1 (Maniche 24)
Getafe 0 Att: 34,000

Espanyol 0
Real Madrid 1 (Van Nistelrooy 49) Att: 33,502

Levante 1 (Alvaro 51)
Celta Vigo 1 (Fernando Baiano 2) Att: 12,532

Real Sociedad 3 (Mingo og 47, Juanito 53, Diego Rivas 59)
Gimnastic 2 (Llera 17, Ruben Castro 48) Att: 22,588

Recreativo 1 (Jesus 18)
Sevilla 3 (Luis Fabiano pen 10, Kanoute 34, Jesus Navas 53) Att: 20,096

Villarreal 1 (Cani 61)
Osasuna 4 (Webo 13, Nekounam 43, David Lopez 55, Juanfran 70) Att: 18,000

Tuesday, December 19
Athletic Bilbao 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 36,000

Valencia 3 (Vicente 38, Villa 56, Morientes 82)
Mallorca 1 (Jonas Gutierrez pen 86) Att: 25,000

Wednesday, December 20
Celta Vigo 0
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 8,000

Getafe 0
Espanyol 1 (Tamudo 74) Att: 6,000

Gimnastic 0
Betis 1 (Marcos Assuncao pen 65) Att: 10,000

Osasuna 2 (Crutxaga 56, Soldado 69)
Levante 1 (Nino 90) Att: 14,943

Racing Santander 2 (Ruben Gonzalez 48, Colsa 63)
Villarreal 1 (Marcos Garcia 86) Att: 13,414

Real Madrid 0
Recreativo 3 (Sinama-Pongolle 35, Uche 52, Viqueira 90) Att: 50,000

Sevilla 4 (Kanoute 29, pen 63, Luis Fabiano 65, Daniel Alves 73)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 45,000

Thursday, December 21
Barcelona 1 (Ronaldinho 40)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Aguero 60) Att: 53,685

Saturday, January 6
Atletico Madrid 0
Gimnastic 0 Att: 40,000

Real Sociedad 2 (Xabier Prieto pen 19, Aranburu 89)
Osasuna 1 (Raul Garcia 56) Att: 21,753

Zaragoza 2 (Diogo 14, D Milito 51)
Sevilla 1 (Luis Fabiano 70) Att: 28,000

Sunday, January 7
Betis 1 (Rafael Sobis 59)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 40,000

Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Capdevila 10, Cristian 56)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 30,000

Espanyol 0
Recreativo 1 (Jesus 55) Att: 18,450

Getafe 1 (Guiza 54)
Barcelona 1 (Xavi 70) Att: 14,000

Levante 2 (Camacho 60, Kapo 75)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 12,411

Mallorca 1 (Exposito og 81)
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Urzaiz 29, 52, Etxeberria 83) Att: 15,000

Villarreal 0
Valencia 1 (Angulo 74) Att: 18,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sevilla	17	12	1	4	36	17	37
Barcelona	16	10	5	1	35	13	35
Real Madrid	17	10	2	5	26	16	32
Zaragoza	17	9	3	5	30	19	30
Valencia	17	9	3	5	24	15	30
Atletico Madrid	17	8	5	4	21	12	29
Recreativo	17	9	1	7	27	24	28
Osasuna	17	7	2	8	22	22	23
Getafe	17	6	5	6	12	12	23
Espanyol	17	5	7	5	15	17	22
Villarreal	17	6	4	7	17	24	22
Celta Vigo	17	5	6	6	20	22	21
R Santander	17	5	6	6	16	22	21
Dep La Coruna	17	5	5	7	13	23	20
Athletic Bilbao	17	4	6	7	21	27	18
Levante	17	4	6	7	16	23	18
Mallorca	17	4	5	8	14	25	17
Betis	16	4	4	8	16	19	16
Real Sociedad	17	2	7	8	12	23	13
Gimnastic	17	2	3	12	15	33	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla)
12 Diego Milito (Zaragoza)
12 Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
9 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)
8 Fernando Baiano (Celta Vigo)
8 David Villa (Valencia)

SWITZERLAND

Dec 9: Young Boys 3 St Gallen 0; Zurich 2 Sion 1; Schaffhausen 3 Grasshopper 3.
Dec 10: Lucerne 2 Thun 1; Aarau 2 Basle 3.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	18	13	1	4	38	17	40
Sion	18	9	5	4	35	26	32
St Gallen	18	10	2	6	29	24	32
Grasshopper	18	9	4	5	34	19	31
Basle	18	9	3	6	39	31	30
Young Boys	18	9	3	6	30	23	30
Lucerne	18	5	4	9	19	26	19
Schaffhausen	18	3	6	9	18	32	15
Thun	18	3	5	10	11	34	14
Aarau	18	3	1	14	13	34	10

TURKEY

Dec 8: Ankaragucu 0 Fenerbahce 1.
Dec 9: Rizespor 3 Sakaryaspor 1; Erciyesspor 0 Sivasspor 0; Besiktas 2 Kayserispor 1.
Dec 10: Denizlispor 0 Manisaspor 0; Galatasaray 3 Bursaspor 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Konyaspor 0; Genclerbirligi 1 Antalyaspor 0; Trabzonspor 3 Ankaraspor 0.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	17	11	4	2	35	15	37
Galatasaray	17	8	6	3	32	20	30
Besiktas	17	8	5	4	23	16	29
Manisaspor	17	8	4	5	32	23	28
Genclerbirligi	17	8	3	6	20	18	27
Kayserispor	17	7	5	5	22	20	26
Bursaspor	17	7	3	7	21	21	24
Konyaspor	17	6	6	5	19	20	24
Ankaraspor	17	4	11	2	21	18	23
Ankaragucu	17	5	7	5	20	16	22
Sivasspor	17	6	4	7	17	22	22
Gaziantepspor	17	5	5	7	18	25	20
Trabzonspor	17	5	4	8	20	21	19
Denizlispor	17	4	7	6	13	15	19
Rizespor	17	5	3	9	14	20	18
Antalyaspor	17	3	8	6	18	21	17
Sakaryaspor	17	3	6	8	10	21	15
Erciyesspor	17	2	5	10	15	38	11

UKRAINE

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	13	3	0	38	12	42
Shakhtar	16	12	2	2	36	6	38
Metalist	16	8	5	3	18	13	29
Arsenal	16	6	7	3	18	17	25
Dnipro	16	5	9	2	14	9	24
Karpaty	16	6	5	5	13	16	23
Tavriya	16	6	3	7	14	15	21
Metalurh D	16	5	6	5	14	16	21
Chornomorets	16	5	5	6	20	23	20
Kryvbas	16	4	8	4	17	19	20
Vorskla	16	4	4	8	12	17	16
Metalurh Z	16	3	7	6	9	18	16
Illichivets	16	4	3	9	13	20	15
FC Kharkiv	16	3	4	9	14	27	13
Zorya	16	2	6	8	13	24	12
Stal	16	2	3	11	10	21	9

WALES

WALES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TNS	16	13	1	2	45	11	40
Rhyl	18	12	3	3	42	26	39
Welshpool	18	11	3	4	38	24	36
Llanelli	16	9	5	2	36	15	32
Connah's Quay	17	9	5	3	32	26	32
Carmarthen	17	8	4	5	37	27	28
Port Talbot	17	8	3	6	24	21	27
Bangor	18	7	4	7	34	27	25
Aberystwyth	16	6	5	5	28	21	23
Haverfordwest	19	5	6	8	32	32	21
Porthmadog	18	4	7	7	23	29	19
Cwmbran	18	4	6	8	26	36	18
Cefn Druids	17	5	3	9	23	38	18
Newtown	17	5	2	10	18	29	17
Caersws	18	3	6	9	20	37	15
Airbus UK	18	1	5	12	19	49	8
Caernarfon	16	1	4	11	18	47	7

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Draw & match schedule

Preliminary round
Santos (Bra) v Blooming (Bol) (1)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) v Danubio (Uru) (2)
Tolima (Col) v Deportivo Tachira (Ven) (3)
Tacuary (Par) v LDU Quito (Ecu) (4)
Parana (Bra) v Cobreloa (Chl) (5)
3rd Mexican reps v Sporting Cristal (Per) (6)

Two-leg ties, to be completed by February 8
Winners enter group stage

Group 1
Banfield (Arg)
El Nacional (Ecu)
Libertad (Par)
Winners preliminary round game 6

Feb 20 El Nacional-winners game 6
Feb 20 Libertad-Banfield
Feb 27 Banfield-El Nacional
Mar 1 Winners game 6-Libertad
Mar 6 El Nacional-Libertad
Mar 7 Winners game 6-Banfield
Mar 21 Banfield-winners game 6
Mar 27 Libertad-El Nacional
Apr 3 El Nacional-Banfield
Apr 11 Libertad-winners game 6
Apr 18 Banfield-Libertad
Apr 18 Winners game 6-El Nacional

Group 2
Alianza Lima (Per)
Audax Italiano (Chl)
Sao Paulo (Bra)
2nd Mexican representatives

Feb 14 Audax Italiano-Sao Paulo
Feb 20 Alianza Lima-2nd Mexican reps
Feb 28 Sao Paulo-Alianza Lima
Feb 28 2nd Mexican reps-Audax Italiano
Mar 13 Alianza Lima-Audax Italiano
Mar 21 2nd Mexican reps-Sao Paulo
Mar 29 Audax Italiano-Alianza Lima
Apr 4 Sao Paulo-2nd Mexican reps
Apr 11 Audax Italiano-2nd Mexican reps
Apr 18 Alianza Lima-Sao Paulo
Apr 25 Sao Paulo-Audax Italiano
Apr 25 2nd Mexican reps-Alianza Lima

Group 3
Cerro Porteno (Par)
Cucuta (Col)
Gremio (Bra)
Winners preliminary round game 3

Feb 13 Cucuta-winners game 3
Feb 15 Cerro Porteno-Gremio
Feb 27 Gremio-Cucuta
Mar 7 Winners game 3-Cerro Porteno
Mar 13 Cucuta-Cerro Porteno
Mar 15 Winners game 3-Gremio
Mar 20 Cerro Porteno-Cucuta
Mar 27 Gremio-winners game 3
Apr 10 Cerro Porteno-winners game 3
Apr 11 Cucuta-Gremio
Apr 24 Gremio-Cerro Porteno
Apr 24 Winners game 3-Cucuta

Group 4
Emelec (Ecu)
Internacional (Bra)
Nacional (Uru)
Winners preliminary round game 2

Feb 13 Emelec-winners game 2
Feb 21 Nacional-Internacional
Feb 28 Internacional-Emelec
Mar 7 Winners game 2-Nacional
Mar 14 Winners game 2-Internacional
Mar 22 Emelec-Nacional
Mar 28 Internacional-winners game 2
Apr 3 Nacional-Emelec
Apr 10 Emelec-Internacional
Apr 12 Nacional-winners game 2
Apr 19 Internacional-Nacional
Apr 19 Winners game 2-Emelec

Group 5
Flamengo (Bra)
Real Potosi (Bol)
UA Maracaibo (Ven)
Winners preliminary round game 5

Feb 14 Real Potosi-Flamengo
Feb 15 UA Maracaibo-winners game 5
Feb 21 Winners game 5-Real Potosi
Feb 21 Flamengo-UA Maracaibo
Feb 28 UA Maracaibo-Real Potosi
Mar 13 Real Potosi-UA Maracaibo
Mar 14 Winners game 5-Flamengo
Mar 21 Flamengo-winners game 5
Apr 4 UA Maracaibo-Flamengo
Apr 10 Real Potosi-winners game 5
Apr 18 Flamengo-Real Potosi
Apr 18 Winners game 5-UA Maracaibo

Group 6
Caracas (Ven)
Colo Colo (Chl)
River Plate (Arg)
Winners preliminary round game 4

Feb 22 Colo Colo-River Plate
Feb 27 Caracas-winners game 4
Mar 6 Winners game 4-Colo Colo
Mar 8 River Plate-Caracas
Mar 15 Winners game 4-River Plate
Mar 20 Caracas-Colo Colo
Mar 27 Colo Colo-Caracas
Mar 29 River Plate-winners game 4
Apr 3 Colo Colo-winners game 4
Apr 5 Caracas-River Plate
Apr 25 River Plate-Colo Colo
Apr 25 Winners game 4-Caracas

Group 7
Boca Juniors (Arg)
Bolivar (Bol)
Cienciano (Per)
Toluca (Mex)

Feb 14 Bolivar-Boca Juniors
Feb 21 Cienciano-Toluca
Feb 27 Toluca-Bolivar
Mar 1 Boca Juniors-Cienciano
Mar 8 Cienciano-Bolivar
Mar 14 Toluca-Boca Juniors
Mar 22 Boca Juniors-Toluca
Mar 28 Bolivar-Cienciano
Apr 4 Cienciano-Boca Juniors
Apr 12 Bolivar-Toluca
Apr 26 Boca Juniors-Bolivar
Apr 26 Toluca-Cienciano

Group 8
Defensor (Uru)
Deportivo Pasto (Col)
Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata (Arg)
Winners preliminary round game 1

Feb 13 Defensor-Gimnasia LP
Feb 22 Dep Pasto-winners game 1
Mar 1 Winners game 1-Defensor
Mar 6 Gimnasia LP-Dep Pasto
Mar 14 Winners game 1-Gimnasia LP
Mar 15 Dep Pasto-Defensor
Mar 22 Gimnasia LP-winners game 1
Mar 28 Defensor-Dep Pasto
Apr 5 Defensor-winners game 1
Apr 5 Dep Pasto-Gimnasia LP
Apr 19 Gimnasia LP-Defensor
Apr 19 Winners game 1-Dep Pasto

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Final, 1st leg

Nov 30
Pachuca (Mex) 1 (Chitiva 27)
Colo Colo (Chl) 1 (Suazo 50)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Pachuca: Calero - Salazar, Lopez (Saucedo 71), Mosquera, Pinto, Aguilar (Rodriguez 46), Correa, Caballero (Alvarez 58), Chitiva, Gimenez, Cacho.
Colo Colo: Cejas - Riffo, Henriquez, Vidal, Ormeno (Villarroel 78), Melendez, Sanhueza, Fierro (Mena 88), Fernandez, Sanchez (Gonzalez 60), Suazo.

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 13
Colo Colo 1 (Suazo 35)
Pachuca 2 (Caballero 53, Gimenez 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Pachuca 3-2 on agg
Colo Colo: Cejas - Riffo, Vidal, Henriquez, Ormeno (Caceres 79), Melendez (Gonzalez 86), Sanhueza, Fierro, Fernandez, Suazo, Sanchez (Caneo 83).
Sent off: Fierro 76min.
Pachuca: Calero - Lopez, Mosquera, Pinto, Cabrera, Salazar (Alvarez 46), Correa, Caballero, Chitiva, Gimenez (Alfaro 83), Cacho (Rodriguez 46).
Sent off: Chitiva 76min.

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, December 8
Independiente 1 (Gonzalez 61)
Gimnasia J 2 (Balvorin 1, Gandin 71)

San Lorenzo 2 (Gonzalez pen 2, pen 11)
Quilmes 4 (Sosa 42, pen 44, Garcia 51, Musto 66)

Saturday, December 9
Gimnasia LP 1 (Romero 48)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Godoy Cruz 0
Racing Club 0

Nueva Chicago 2 (Martinez 80, Higuain pen 90)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Cardozo 29)

Sunday, December 10
Banfield 3 (Luchetti pen 19, Barrales 45, Barraza 56)
Belgrano 1 (Serrizuela pen 23)

Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo pen 30)
Lanus 2 (Graf 44, Archubi 57)

Estudiantes 2 (Alayes 86, Pavone 90)
Arsenal 0

Rosario Central 3 (Alemanno 45, Wanchope 84, Zelaya 90)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Carrizo og 85)
River Plate 1 (Higuain 48)

ARGENTINA – OPENING – FINAL*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors*	19	14	2	3	41	17	44
Estudiantes*	19	14	2	3	35	12	44
River Plate	19	11	5	3	33	17	38
Independiente	19	10	2	7	33	24	32
Arsenal	19	9	5	5	26	22	32
Lanus	19	9	4	6	26	24	31
Velez Sarsfield	19	8	6	5	25	18	30
Rosario Central	19	8	4	7	28	22	28
Racing Club*	18	7	5	6	22	18	26
Gimnasia J	19	8	2	9	19	19	26
San Lorenzo*	18	7	4	7	29	33	25
Belgrano	19	6	5	8	18	24	23
Gimnasia LP	19	7	2	10	21	40	23
Nueva Chicago	19	6	4	9	20	32	22
Banfield	19	4	8	7	21	26	20
Argentinos Jnrs	19	5	5	9	22	28	20
Colon Santa Fe	19	5	3	11	20	34	18
Godoy Cruz	19	3	8	8	19	26	17
Newell's OB	19	3	7	9	21	28	16
Quilmes	19	2	3	14	23	38	9

**Boca Juniors and Estudiantes entered championship play-off after finishing level on points. Racing Club v San Lorenzo not played*

Championship play-off

Dec 13 - Estadio Jose Amalfitani, Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo 4)
Estudiantes 2 (Sosa 64, Pavone 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Pezzotta
Sent off: Ledesma (Boca) 38min; Alvarez (Estudiantes) 38min

TOP GOALSCORERS

12 Rodrigo Palacio (Boca Juniors)
12 Mauro Zarate (Velez Sarsfield)
11 Oscar Cardozo (Newell's Old Boys)
10 Federico Higuain (Nueva Chicago)
10 Daniel Montenegro (Independiente)
10 Martin Palermo (Boca Juniors)
10 Mariano Pavone (Estudiantes)

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP Semi-finals

1st legs - Dec 8/9; 2nd legs - Dec 16/17
Audax Italiano v O'Higgins
4-1, 2-4 (agg 6-5)
Colo Colo v Cobreloa
3-0, 3-3 (agg 6-3)

Final, 1st leg

Dec 20
Colo Colo 3 (Fernandez 22, Suazo 55, Melendez 85)
Audax Italiano 0
HT: 1-0

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 23
Audax Italiano 2 (Villanueva 47, Paruolo 90)
Colo Colo 3 (Suazo 77, 81, Mena 89)
HT: 0-0
Colo Colo 6-2 on agg

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP Play-offs

Dec 10: Chico 3 Dep Pasto 4; At Nacional 1 Tolima 2; Millonarios 1 Cucuta 0; At Huila 3 Indep Medellin 2.
Dec 13: Dep Pasto 0 At Nacional 0; Tolima 2 Chico 0; Cucuta 0 At Huila 0; Indep Medellin 4 Millonarios 0.

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	6	4	0	2	10	5	12
At Nacional	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Dep Pasto	6	2	2	2	8	11	8
Chico	6	1	2	3	7	10	5

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cucuta	6	3	1	2	6	4	10
Indep Medellin	6	3	0	3	12	7	9
Millonarios	6	3	0	3	6	10	9
At Huila	6	2	1	3	7	10	7

Final, 1st leg

Dec 17
Cucuta 1 (Saraz 23)
Tolima 0
HT: 1-0

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 20
Tolima 1 (Anchico 60)
Cucuta 1 (Torres 77)
HT: 0-0
Cucuta 2-1 on agg

ECUADOR

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Dec 9: El Nacional 2 Dep Quito 1.
Dec 10: Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 1; Emelec 1 Barcelona 1.
Dec 13: Dep Quito 4 LDU Quito 3; El Nacional 2 Emelec 2; Barcelona 2 Olmedo 3.
Dec 17: LDU Quito 1 Barcelona 1; Olmedo 0 El Nacional 0; Emelec 4 Dep Quito 0.

OVERALL CHAMP'SHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Nacional	10	3	5	2	16	11	19 [5]
Emelec	10	4	3	3	20	17	17 [2]
LDU Quito	10	3	4	3	17	13	16 [3]
Olmedo	10	3	5	2	14	12	15 [1]
Barcelona	10	3	4	3	10	15	14 [1]
Dep Quito	10	3	1	6	14	23	10

Teams received bonus points (figure in brackets) relating to finishing position in opening and closing championships – 3pts for a 1st place; 2pts for a 2nd place; 1pt for a 3rd place

PARAGUAY

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFF

(opening winners v closing winners)

1st leg

Dec 6
Cerro Porteno 0
Libertad 0

2nd leg

Dec 10
Libertad 2 (Lopez 24, Aquino 28)
Cerro Porteno 1 (Da Silva 60)
HT: 2-0
Libertad 2-1 on agg

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 10: Universitario 2 Melgar 1; Sport Ancash 1 Alianza Lima 0; Sport Boys 4 Union Huaral 1; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Jose Galvez 1; Cienciano 4 Alianza Atletico 1; Sporting Cristal 0 Universidad SMP 2.
Dec 16: Alianza Atletico 0 Sporting Cristal 0.
Dec 17: Union Huaral 0 Universitario 1; Alianza Lima 1 Sport Boys 2; Melgar 1 Cienciano 2; Jose Galvez 4 Sport Ancash 3; Universidad SMP 2 Coronel Bolognesi 0.

PERU – CLOSING – FINAL*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario*	22	12	5	5	34	24	41
Cienciano*	22	13	2	7	40	31	41
C Bolognesi	22	12	3	7	32	20	39
Alianza Lima	22	11	5	6	27	17	38
Univ SMP	22	10	4	8	24	21	34
Sporting Cristal	22	9	4	9	24	15	31
Melgar	22	8	7	7	23	22	31
Sport Boys	22	9	4	9	26	28	31
Jose Galvez	22	6	6	10	24	29	24
Sport Ancash	22	6	5	11	26	39	23
Alianza Atletico	22	5	6	11	29	40	21
Union Huaral	22	4	3	15	15	38	15

**Universitario and Cienciano entered championship play-off after finishing level on points*

Closing championship play-off

Dec 20
Universitario 1 (Alva pen 75)
Cienciano 2 (Chara 71, Marino 88)
HT: 0-0

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFF

(opening winners v closing winners)

1st leg

Dec 23
Cienciano 1 (Mostto 37)
Alianza Lima 0
HT: 1-0

2nd leg

Dec 27
Alianza Lima 3 (Arakaki 22, Lugo og 36, Maestri 52)
Cienciano 1 (Marino 49)
HT: 2-0
Alianza Lima 3-2 on agg

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 9: Rampla Juniors 3 Cerrito 4; Wanderers 2 Central Espanol 1; River Plate 1 Tacuarembo 1; Liverpool 2 Bella Vista 4.
Dec 10: Rocha 1 Progreso 2; Rentistas 1 Nacional 2; Penarol 1 Danubio 4; Defensor 0 Miramar Misiones 0.

URUGUAY – OPENING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Danubio	15	11	1	3	36	17	34
Penarol	15	10	2	3	30	18	32
Defensor	15	9	4	2	28	13	31
Bella Vista	15	10	1	4	25	15	31
Nacional	15	8	3	4	28	22	27
Wanderers	15	8	3	4	22	18	27
Liverpool	15	6	4	5	24	20	22
Central Espanol	15	7	1	7	21	25	22
Tacuarembo	15	4	4	7	15	18	16
Rocha	15	4	3	8	15	21	15
River Plate	15	4	3	8	15	25	15
M Misiones	15	3	5	7	17	26	14
Cerrito*	15	4	4	7	16	21	13
Progreso	15	3	4	8	16	31	13
Rampla Jnrs	15	3	3	9	15	23	12
Rentistas	15	1	5	9	13	23	8

**3pts deducted for crowd trouble during a home game*

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 10: Carabobo 1 Caracas 3; UA Maracaibo 3 Portuguesa 1; Monagas 1 Mineros Guayana 1; Zamora 2 Trujillanos 1; Dep Tachira 2 Aragua 0.
Dec 17: Trujillanos 1 Dep Tachira 0; Aragua 0 Carabobo 0; Caracas 3 UA Maracaibo 1; Portuguesa 1 Monagas 0; Mineros Guayana 0 Zamora 1.

VENEZUELA – OPENING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	18	10	6	2	27	12	36
UA Maracaibo	18	10	6	2	28	17	36
Mineros G'ana	18	7	6	5	27	24	27
Dep Tachira	18	6	7	5	22	19	25
Zamora	18	5	8	5	24	22	23
Portuguesa	18	5	8	5	23	23	23
Carabobo	18	4	9	5	17	22	21
Aragua	18	4	7	7	21	24	19
Trujillanos	18	3	5	10	21	31	14
Monagas	18	1	8	9	14	30	11

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP Final, 1st leg

Dec 7
Guadalajara 1 (Bravo 44)
Toluca 1 (Marioni 76)
HT: 1-0

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 10
Toluca 1 (Marioni 18)
Guadalajara 2 (Rodriguez 52, Bautista 69)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Archundia
Guadalajara 3-2 on agg

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Arabi (Kuw)
Al Rayyan (Qat)
Al Wahda (UAE)
Al Zawra'a (Irq)

Group B
Al Hilal (Sau)
Al Kuwait (Kuw)
Esteghlal (Irn)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)

Group C
Al Karama (Syr)
Al Najaf (Irq)
Al Sadd (Qat)
Neftchi (Uzb)

Group D
Al Ain (UAE)
Al Ittihad (Syr)
Al Shabab (Sau)
Sepahan (Irn)

Group E
Persik Kediri (Ins)
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn)
Sydney FC (Aus)
Urawa Reds (Jap)

Group F
Arema Malang (Ins)
Bangkok University (Tha)
Chunnam Dragons (SKo)
Kawasaki Frontale (Jap)

Group G
Adelaide United (Aus)
Dong Tam Long An (Vie)
Shandong Luneng (Chn)
Songnam Ilhwa (SKo)

Group winners qualify for quarter-finals. Bye to quarter-finals: Chonbuk Motors (SKo; holders)

Group stage begins on March 7

CHINA

CHINA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shandong	28	22	3	3	74	26	69
Shanghai S'hua	28	14	10	4	37	19	52
Beijing H'dai	28	13	10	5	27	16	49
Changchun	28	13	7	8	41	26	46
Dalian	28	13	6	9	43	29	45
Tianjin	28	10	10	8	40	38	40
Shanghai Utd	28	9	12	7	32	25	39
Xiamen	28	9	11	8	28	27	38
Xi'an	28	8	12	8	33	34	36
Wuhan	28	8	7	13	28	42	31
Shenzhen	28	8	6	14	22	42	30
Shenyang	28	6	8	14	22	43	26
Liaoning	28	6	8	14	24	42	26
Qingdao	28	6	7	15	25	36	25
Chongqing	28	3	7	18	20	51	16

Big derby...River Plate will play at Boca Juniors in mid-April

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sunday, February 11
San Lorenzo v Gimnasia Jujuy
Independiente v Colon Santa Fe
Rosario Central v Belgrano
Banfield v Boca Juniors
River Plate v Lanus
Velez Sarsfield v Newell's Old Boys
Nueva Chicago v Racing Club
Godoy Cruz v Argentinos Juniors
Gimnasia La Plata v Arsenal
Estudiantes v Quilmes

Sunday, February 18
Arsenal v Godoy Cruz
Argentinos Juniors v Nueva Chicago
Racing Club v Velez Sarsfield
Newell's Old Boys v River Plate
Lanus v Banfield
Boca Juniors v Rosario Central
Belgrano v Independiente
Colon Santa Fe v San Lorenzo
Gimnasia Jujuy v Estudiantes
Quilmes v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, February 25
Gimnasia La Plata v Gimnasia Jujuy
Estudiantes v Colon Santa Fe
San Lorenzo v Belgrano
Independiente v Boca Juniors
Rosario Central v Banfield
Lanus v Newell's Old Boys
River Plate v Racing Club
Velez Sarsfield v Argentinos Juniors
Nueva Chicago v Arsenal
Godoy Cruz v Quilmes

Sunday, March 4
Gimnasia Jujuy v Godoy Cruz
Quilmes v Nueva Chicago
Arsenal v Velez Sarsfield
Argentinos Juniors v River Plate
Rosario Central v Lanus
Racing Club v Newell's Old Boys
Banfield v Independiente
Boca Juniors v San Lorenzo
Belgrano v Estudiantes
Colon Santa Fe v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, March 11
Nueva Chicago v Gimnasia Jujuy
Godoy Cruz v Colon Santa Fe
Gimnasia La Plata v Belgrano
Estudiantes v Boca Juniors
San Lorenzo v Banfield
Independiente v Rosario Central
Lanus v Racing Club
Newell's Old Boys v Argentinos Juniors
River Plate v Arsenal
Velez Sarsfield v Quilmes

Sunday, March 18
Belgrano v Godoy Cruz
Colon Santa Fe v Nueva Chicago
Gimnasia Jujuy v Velez Sarsfield
Quilmes v River Plate
Independiente v Lanus
Arsenal v Newell's Old Boys
Argentinos Juniors v Racing Club
Rosario Central v San Lorenzo
Banfield v Estudiantes
Boca Juniors v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, March 25
River Plate v Gimnasia Jujuy
Velez Sarsfield v Colon Santa Fe
Nueva Chicago v Belgrano
Godoy Cruz v Boca Juniors
Gimnasia La Plata v Banfield
Estudiantes v Rosario Central
San Lorenzo v Independiente
Lanus v Argentinos Juniors
Racing Club v Arsenal
Newell's Old Boys v Quilmes

Sunday, April 1
Banfield v Godoy Cruz
Boca Juniors v Nueva Chicago
Belgrano v Velez Sarsfield
Colon Santa Fe v River Plate
San Lorenzo v Lanus
Gimnasia Jujuy v Newell's Old Boys
Quilmes v Racing Club
Arsenal v Argentinos Juniors
Independiente v Estudiantes
Rosario Central v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, April 8
Racing Club v Gimnasia Jujuy
Newell's Old Boys v Colon Santa Fe
River Plate v Belgrano
Velez Sarsfield v Boca Juniors
Nueva Chicago v Banfield
Godoy Cruz v Rosario Central
Gimnasia La Plata v Independiente
Estudiantes v San Lorenzo
Lanus v Arsenal
Argentinos Juniors v Quilmes

Sunday, April 15
Independiente v Godoy Cruz
Rosario Central v Nueva Chicago
Banfield v Velez Sarsfield
Boca Juniors v River Plate
Estudiantes v Lanus
Belgrano v Newell's Old Boys
Colon Santa Fe v Racing Club
Gimnasia Jujuy v Argentinos Juniors
Quilmes v Arsenal
San Lorenzo v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, April 22
Arsenal v Gimnasia Jujuy
Argentinos Juniors v Colon Santa Fe
Racing Club v Belgrano
Newell's Old Boys v Boca Juniors
River Plate v Banfield
Velez Sarsfield v Rosario Central
Nueva Chicago v Independiente
Godoy Cruz v San Lorenzo
Gimnasia La Plata v Estudiantes
Lanus v Quilmes

Sunday, April 29
Estudiantes v Godoy Cruz
San Lorenzo v Nueva Chicago
Independiente v Velez Sarsfield
Rosario Central v River Plate
Gimnasia La Plata v Lanus
Banfield v Newell's Old Boys
Boca Juniors v Racing Club
Belgrano v Argentinos Juniors
Colon Santa Fe v Arsenal
Gimnasia Jujuy v Quilmes

Sunday, May 6
Lanus v Gimnasia Jujuy
Quilmes v Colon Santa Fe
Arsenal v Belgrano
Argentinos Juniors v Boca Juniors
Racing Club v Banfield
Newell's Old Boys v Rosario Central
River Plate v Independiente
Velez Sarsfield v San Lorenzo
Nueva Chicago v Estudiantes
Godoy Cruz v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, May 13
Colon Santa Fe v Gimnasia Jujuy
Gimnasia La Plata v Nueva Chicago
Estudiantes v Velez Sarsfield
San Lorenzo v River Plate
Godoy Cruz v Lanus
Independiente v Newell's Old Boys
Rosario Central v Racing Club
Banfield v Argentinos Juniors
Boca Juniors v Arsenal
Belgrano v Quilmes

Sunday, May 20
Nueva Chicago v Godoy Cruz
Lanus v Colon Santa Fe
Gimnasia Jujuy v Belgrano
Quilmes v Boca Juniors
Arsenal v Banfield
Argentinos Juniors v Rosario Central
Racing Club v Independiente
Newell's Old Boys v San Lorenzo
River Plate v Estudiantes
Velez Sarsfield v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, May 27
Boca Juniors v Gimnasia Jujuy
Belgrano v Colon Santa Fe
Godoy Cruz v Velez Sarsfield
Gimnasia La Plata v River Plate
Nueva Chicago v Lanus
Estudiantes v Newell's Old Boys
San Lorenzo v Racing Club
Independiente v Argentinos Juniors
Rosario Central v Arsenal
Banfield v Quilmes

Sunday, June 3
River Plate v Godoy Cruz
Velez Sarsfield v Nueva Chicago
Lanus v Belgrano
Colon Santa Fe v Boca Juniors
Gimnasia Jujuy v Banfield
Quilmes v Rosario Central
Arsenal v Independiente
Argentinos Juniors v San Lorenzo
Racing Club v Estudiantes
Newell's Old Boys v Gimnasia La Plata

Sunday, June 10
Rosario Central v Gimnasia Jujuy
Banfield v Colon Santa Fe
Boca Juniors v Belgrano
Nueva Chicago v River Plate
Velez Sarsfield v Lanus
Godoy Cruz v Newell's Old Boys
Gimnasia La Plata v Racing Club
Estudiantes v Argentinos Juniors
San Lorenzo v Arsenal
Independiente v Quilmes

Sunday, June 17
Racing Club v Godoy Cruz
Newell's Old Boys v Nueva Chicago
River Plate v Velez Sarsfield
Lanus v Boca Juniors
Belgrano v Banfield
Colon Santa Fe v Rosario Central
Gimnasia Jujuy v Independiente
Quilmes v San Lorenzo
Arsenal v Estudiantes
Argentinos Juniors v Gimnasia La Plata

THE Knowledge

everything you need to know about...

Winter breaks

THE ENGLISH PREMIERSHIP is the only major European league that does not take a break over the Christmas/New Year holidays. This season, as usual, the German Bundesliga took the longest break – six weeks, from December 17 to January 27. Portugal (four weeks, December 17 to January 14) was the next longest, followed by three weeks in France and Italy (both December 23 to January 13) and Holland (December 31 to January 19). The Spanish had the least time off, apart from England, with just a two-and-a-half-week break (December 21 to January 6).

During the long lay-off, most Bundesliga clubs head south for some sunshine. Traditionally, that has meant training camps in Spain and the Mediterranean but, increasingly, clubs are travelling further afield. This season, Bayern Munich, Hamburg and Stuttgart headed for Dubai, while leaders Werder Bremen travelled to Belek in Turkey. Portugal is also a popular destination, with Eintracht Frankfurt, Wolfsburg, Borussia Monchengladbach and Alemannia Aachen all heading for the Algarve. Only Schalke stayed at home.

The trips were not a universal success. For instance, the Wolfsburg players were less than satisfied with the catering arrangements at their base. "It's been a catastrophe," said midfielder Miroslav Karhan. "There's no variety. One day it's noodles or meat and potatoes, the next we have meat and noodles or potatoes."

Friendly games were the order of the day for those clubs in the Middle East. Bayern staged a late, late comeback in their Dubai Cup meeting with Marseille, scoring three times in the last five minutes to snatch a 4-3 victory. Stuttgart faced the national teams of both Iran and the United Arab Emirates, losing 1-0 and 2-1 respectively.

Gulf trip...Bayern train in Dubai

Marseille were the only French side to go abroad, but their break was overshadowed by rumours about Sven Goran Eriksson joining the club. Canadian businessman Jack Kachkar is thought to be on the verge of buying Marseille, and word spread that he intended to appoint the Swede, who was seen hanging around the team hotel in Dubai. Eriksson allegedly approached several Marseille players, including Franck Ribery and Djibril Cisse, apparently telling them that he would soon be in charge. Angry president Pape Diouf promptly told Sven to back off.

Flower power...Inter's Marco Materazzi with Bahrain's sports chief Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khalifa

Leading Italian clubs also headed south in search of sun. Milan spent a week in Malta, interrupted by a trip home to play Juventus in the annual Berlusconi Trophy match, and finished off with a 5-0 win over local side Birkirkara.

Internazionale held a six-day training camp in Bahrain. "The week was very important for us," said defender Javier Zanetti. "It gave us a chance to recharge the batteries." However, midfielder Dejan Stankovic was not as enthusiastic. "The break certainly takes away a bit of physical strength and focus," he said.

There were the usual late arrivals back after the winter break by a number of Brazilians following trips to their homeland. Deco, born in Brazil, though a Portuguese international, was given permission by Barcelona to return late after a member of his family was struck by a "serious" illness. His team-mate Ronaldinho reportedly had problems with flight connections.

In Mexico, the opening championship finished on December 10, with the closing campaign not starting until January 20. But eight clubs had little rest over the holiday period since they were set to compete in a special tournament, held in the USA, to determine the last two of Mexico's three Libertadores Cup representatives.

DON'T MISS...

MARCH ISSUE

ON SALE FEBRUARY 16

WORLD SOCCER

AHEAD OF THE GAME

www.worldsoccer.com

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

CRICKET WORLD CUP 2007

EXCLUSIVE TO WHSmith

THE ONLY GUIDE YOU'LL NEED FOR THE WORLD CUP IN THE WEST INDIES.

THE FESTIVAL OF CRICKET STARTS HERE!

ON-SALE FROM FEBRUARY 16

EXCLUSIVELY AT WHSMITH

WHSmith

06.02.07

UMBRO'S NEW ENGLAND HOME SHIRT

UNLEASHED

PERFORMANCE, PERFECTED.

PRE ORDER YOURS IN STORE OR ONLINE NOW AND GET AN OFFICIAL THREE LIONS MUG FREE!* (worth £5.99)

onelove

www.jjbsports.com

* Free three lions mug collected on day of launch - 6th feb.07
Subject to availabilty. £5.00 non returnable deposit
required on all shirts. No pre orders can be taken after 31st jan.07